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ABSTRACT

Sharing concerns and interests of New York State educators in the improvement of literacy, this annual journal raises educational issues such as current thoughts about literacy instruction, educators' roles, literacy in its many forms, college-community literacy partnerships, and recommended reading materials. Articles in the journal are "Who Does What? Rethinking the Roles for Instructional Support Staff" (Richard L. Allington and Patricia Cunningham); "Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning: Voices from English" (Jacqueline L. Marino); "Using the Internet as a Medium for Multicultural Fieldtrips" (Joseph E. Zimmer); "Dialogues about Literacy Education in Russia" (Linda Pratt); "Reading and Television: A Parent's Role in Molding a Child's Future" (David N. Berg); "On the Importance of Real Reading and Writing with ESL College Students" (Effie Papatzikou Cochran); "Discuss, Talk amongst Yourself: Lessons from the Delaney Sisters" (Rose Reissman); "Reader Response: Toward an Evolving Model for Teaching Literature in the Elementary Grades" (Robert W. Blake); "Three Children, Three Stories of School Literacy: Ira, Ani and Caitlin" (Anne McGill-Franzen and others); "Parental Beliefs in Promoting Emergent Literacy for Children with and without Disabilities" (Leslie K. Goldenberg); "Students' Use of Imagery for Understanding in Individualized and Shared Readings of a Short Story" (Bonnie C. Konopak and others); "Developing Children's Phonemic Awareness: How and Why" (Donna M. McDonald); "Learning from Teacher-Research: Journal Writing with Kindergarten Children" (Marilyn S. Clarke); "Non-Ability Grouped and Multi-level Instruction in Fourth Grade: An Application of the Winston Salem Project" (Cynthia J. Grau); "The Ark: Making a Space for Self-Esteem, Literacy and the Arts" (Mary Theresa Streck); "University-School Partnerships as Active, Thriving Havens for Mentorship" (Barbara R. Peltzman and Grace M. Dondero); "A Response to Lives on the Edge" (Jay Murnane); "Penury, Pedagogy and Politics: Another Reaction" (Gregory W. Brooks); "Using Culturally Responsive Materials and Approaches: One Program Designed for Mexican Americans" (Benjamin Salazar); and "Spanning the World on the Wings of Books: Our Choices for 1995," summarizing the recommendations of the NYSRA Children's Literature Committee for 1995. (RS)

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The Language And Literacy Spectrum

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Journal of
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The Language and Literacy Spectrum

Volume 6 Spring 1996

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Information

The **New York State Reading Association** is a statewide organization made up of 43 local reading councils having a total membership of over 6,500 educators from across the state. The goal of **NYSRA** and the local councils is to promote literacy and general improvement of reading at all levels, and to encourage reading as a lifetime activity. All members of **NYSRA** receive a subscription as part of their membership fees.

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The Language and Literacy Spectrum is a publication of the New York State Reading Association. It is published annually and intended for a wide professional audience including classroom teachers, reading and special educators, consultants, college and university faculty, parents and administrators of schools as well as others interested in literacy and the language arts.

The **Spectrum** welcomes manuscripts about literacy and language topics, ideas and events of interest at all levels of education. Only original manuscripts will be considered for publication. The Spectrum welcomes photographs depicting students in varied literacy activities. Black and white photographs are preferred. Parent/guardian permission must be obtained in writing, and the photographs are not returned. The deadline for submitting manuscripts is December 1st of each year. Manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be addressed to:

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1. Varied manuscript formats are welcome. The journal accepts manuscripts related to reading and the language arts at all levels of interest. Articles by teachers as active researchers are encouraged. Technical articles and research reports are encouraged but must be written in a style suitable for the general readership of **The Spectrum.**

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From the Editors

The sixth issue of *The Language and Literacy Spectrum* contains several sections: Articles, Literacy Research, College-Community Partnerships, Perspectives, Annual Book Recommendations. These Articles reflect current thoughts about literacy instruction, educators' roles, and literacy in its many forms. Literacy Research includes a cross-section of approaches, from experimental to ethnographic, from university and classroom researchers. College-Community Partnerships, a category we hope will becomes a yearly *Spectrum* feature, highlights dynamic outreach connections. The Perspectives section includes two reviews of *Lines on the Edge* and serves as a point/counterpoint opportunity on thought-provoking topics related to literacy.. The Annual Book Recommendations discuss the "best picks" from 1995.

The publishing of *The Language and Literacy Spectrum* could not have been possible without the support of others. Steck-Vaughn Berrent assumed the majority of the costs of the printing of the journal and, on behalf of NYSRA, we acknowledge their generous financial contribution. The Sage Colleges continues its general support of the publication of the journal in many daily ways including some postage, fax and phone costs. The Colleges' on-going commitment to the journal is appreciated.

The Editorial Review Board has evaluated many manuscripts, often with severe time constraints. They have, once again, done legions of behind-the-scenes work, and we praise them for their tremendous efforts. Thank you again and again.

Marilyn Fumes, President of NYSRA, has offered much encouragement and enthusiasm for *The Language and Literacy Spectrum*. We continue to be grateful to the NYSRA Executive Board for their continued vision in supporting a state-wide professional journal. Thank you to one and all. Your literacy leadership is necessary in these challenging educational times.

Finally we thank the New York State Reading Association for the continued opportunity to serve as editors for *The Language and Literacy Spectrum*. We welcome suggestions and comments from our readership. We look forward to hearing from you.

KMG & PCMcD
January 15, 1996
The Sage Colleges
Troy, NY

Cover photograph shows Jaala Palmer and Taeko Onishi engaged in literacy at The ARK, Troy, N.Y. *Photograph is courtesy of Mary Theresa Streck.*

Meushia Gee and Tashay Howard enjoy poetry together at The Ark.

Photograph courtesy of Mary Theresa Streck.

Who does what? Rethinking roles for instructional support staff.[1]

Richard L. Allington and Patricia Cunningham

ABSTRACT

Citing the tremendous increase in instructional support staff over the last three decades, this paper argues that elementary school children would be better served by a reorganization of school resources. To truly impact youngsters, it is recommended that only specialists who have viable, substantive roles within the classroom continue; schools are strongly encouraged to evaluate their effectiveness relative to children's learning.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the number of adults working in elementary schools has doubled since 1960. At the same time, class size has not changed dramatically. Explanation of these contradictory trends seems to lie in understanding the substantial growth in the role of special program instructional support staff (Allington, 1994). In 1960 few schools employed reading teachers, learning disabilities teachers, speech and language teachers, art teachers, physical education teachers, bilingual teachers, gifted and talented teachers, paraprofessionals, and so on. In addition, few schools had librarians (because few had school libraries), psychologists, counselors, or social workers on staff. Few schools had assistant principals. As the elementary school curriculum expanded, more special content area teachers were added to the faculty. As various state and federal programs for at-risk children expanded, schools added more special teachers and more paraprofessionals (just in special education programs alone the number of paraprofessionals has increased from 25,000 to over 200,000 in the past twenty-five years according to Blalock [1991]).

Today in many elementary schools there are as many non-classroom teachers and other professional staff members as there are classroom teachers. According to the NCES data, more than half of the adults working in the average school today are not classroom teachers! Whenever a school begins to consider reorganizing to better meet the needs of all children, it is essential that the roles and responsibilities of all professional and paraprofessional staff be considered.

The critical nature of classroom teachers.

A variety of research over the past 30 years has indicated that high-quality classroom instruction is the critical variable in literacy development and that there are many common features of that instruction (e.g., Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Goodlad, 1983). While much has been written about "effective schools," attempts to create effective schools from less effective ones have been largely disappointing. In other words, there is but limited evidence that "effective schools" movement of the last decade actually created many effective schools (Rowan & Guthrie, 1989). It seems that the "effective schools" effort may have overlooked a critical and central aspect of schools, especially elementary schools. That is, schools are collections of individual classrooms, classrooms where, usually, a single teacher and stable group of children meet and interact for about 5 hours each day. No school can be effective unless the curriculum and instruction offered in the classrooms is effective. In our own work, we have found many more effective classroom teachers than effective schools. Some schools, however, have a larger number of effective classroom teachers than do others. When most classroom teachers are effective, the school appears effective. When many classroom teachers appear ineffective, the school appears ineffective.

> ...high-quality classroom instruction is the critical variable in literacy development...

Now this may seem obvious, but we think the implications are important. Classroom teachers are the critical, but often overlooked and typically underappreciated, key to reducing the risk that some children face in our schools. It is classroom teachers who will ultimately decide the fate of children and the fate of efforts to change elementary schools. It is the long-neglected classroom teacher who should be the focus of any effort to improve schools and improve the opportunities for children who have been placed at-risk of school failure. For many at-risk children classroom teachers are their last best hope for school and life success.

Much of the lack of recognition of the importance of the role of classrooms teachers can be traced to a distinct federal policy of cre-

1. This is adapted from: Allington, R. L. & Cunningham, P. A. (1996). **Schools that work: Where all children read and write.** New York: Harper Collins.

ating an ever-expanding "second system" of specialist teachers and professional staff. Before 1960 and the Great Society programs, including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] of 1965, most elementary schools had few specialist teachers, paraprofessionals, or specialized staff. Beginning with ESEA and the hiring of remedial reading specialists and continuing the addition of ESL and bilingual education teachers through the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, and the hiring of more special education teachers as a result of the Education of Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and on to the more recent dropout and drug prevention programs, an era evolved in which most new education dollars went to fund the "second system." Recent studies illustrate the impact most dramatically in urban school systems where today only about one-quarter to one-half of the educational funds go to support classroom instruction — half to three-quarters of the money now supports administration, supervision, and special programs (Fischer, 1990; Harp, 1993). Visit virtually any elementary school classroom today and you will see children rotating in and out of the room and paraprofessionals and specialist teachers coming and going throughout the day. In too many schools classroom teachers have not a single hour in which they can teach all their children uninterrupted.

It seems time to seriously consider reorganizing a variety of school resources such that improving the quality of classroom instruction is the primary outcome. We argue that non-classroom teacher members of an elementary school staff are useful only to the extent that their presence improves children's experiences in the regular classroom. It does not matter how well-trained or dedicated a specialist teacher or a psychologist might be if that person has no substantial effect on the quality of classroom instruction. This view may contrast with the dominant view held by many special staff members who often perceive their primary role as "saving" children from the travails of the classroom. But at-risk children ultimately spend more time in classrooms than in any of the special instructional settings that have been created. Special programs and special personnel cannot be considered to be "saving" or serving children unless they have visible, positive influences on classroom practice.

Rethinking the "second system"

Over the past twenty-five years American elementary schools have added and expanded the "second system" of special programs. This expansion was largely intended to create schools that better met the needs of at-risk children. Currently, though, "second system" programs may undermine the critical role classroom teachers actually play in the futures of at-risk children. In fact, for 25 years classroom teachers have often been led to believe that they were ill-equipped to teach at-risk children. Is it any wonder then that many classroom teachers feel a limited sense of professional responsibility for teaching the at-risk children in their classrooms? Second system programs fragment not only professional responsibility but also fragment the curriculum and the school day as children travel from classroom to classroom and teacher to teacher to receive instruction (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989).

Concerns about the continuing expansion of the "second system," reports of the curriculum fragmentation, instructional interference, reduced accountability, and limited impacts on academic achievement have forced federal education officials to begin to rethink the roles that federal funds might play in addressing the educational needs of handicapped and disadvantaged students (LeTendre, 1990). There are three distinct patterns of change that are most obvious. First, there is a shift in emphasis toward collaborative education models — where classroom and specialists teachers are expected to jointly plan and deliver instruction to targeted children. Second, there is the shift toward desegregating education of at-risk children — toward more inclusive education models. Finally, there is a shift in federal policy towards supporting schoolwide reform with categorical program funds — using federal monies to build school capacity to better serve a more diverse group of students.

In the Federal Title 1 Program, the push for collaboration and desegregation began in the mid-1980s with the call for program coordination with the core curriculum and an emphasis on delivery of Title 1 remediation in the classroom (Johnston, Allington & Afflerbach, 1985). At approximately the same time Title 1 Schoolwide Projects were approved for high-concentration, low-income schools. In these schools Title 1 funds could be targeted to schoolwide improvement efforts rather than limited to programs serving only Title 1 eligible children. The recent reauthorization of Title 1 enormously expands the number of schools eligible to participate in this program (in New York State over a thousand new schools will be eligible starting next fall 1996). The most common uses of Title 1 funds in these schoolwide project schools, to date, have been plans that reduce class size in the regular classroom or add extended day or summer school programs, instead of employing Title 1 reading teachers.

In special education there has been a more recent emphasis placed on desegregating special educational programs through more inclusionary education and a shift to consultation with classroom teachers in an attempt to support modifications to classroom instruction (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987). This "inclusionary" education emphasis is buttressed by (1) increasing evidence that the achievement of handicapped children rises with increased integration with no negative effects on the achievement of other children (Epps & Tindal, 1987; Gelzheiser, Meyers & Pruzek, 1992; Sharpe, York & Knight, 1994) and by (2) the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 that provides all handicapped individuals, including children, the right to fully participate in all aspects of American society without discrimination (including, it is argued, instruction in regular classrooms in the neighborhood school). Current proposed changes in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act would eliminate the restrictions on co-mingling special education funds to allow greater flexibility in planning schoolwide reforms that incorporated providing services to children with disabilities in classrooms without necessarily employing special education personnel.

We expect that federal education programs will actually accelerate these trends over the next few years. In fact, there is every reason to believe that the future will see fewer specialist teachers and staff in schools as alternatives to the traditional models achieve greater popularity. In the meantime, there are serious issues that need to be addressed about the design and delivery of instruction for children who participate in one or more of these programs (Schrag, 1995).

Professional responsibility. A primary issue of concern is one of professional responsibility for the education of at-risk children. For instance, we have worked in some schools where the majority of the classroom teachers reported that teaching reading to at-risk children was not primarily their responsibility. Instead, in these schools, classroom teachers felt that children having difficulty learning to read were someone else's responsibility. While these children did often participate in remedial reading or resource room special education classes for part of the day, usually these special classes were only 30-45 minutes long. Nonetheless, in some schools, the vast majority of the classroom teachers reported that teaching these children to read was primarily someone else's responsibility. Not surprisingly, then, few of these teachers developed high-quality classroom lessons that responded to at-risk children's instructional needs. In some cases the at-risk children did not even participate in the classroom reading and language arts instruction, despite the fact that the at-risk children usually spent at least 4 hours in the regular classroom compared to less than an hour in the special program classroom.

Schools need to create a general sense that special programs are part of a unified plan of action addressing the needs of at-risk readers.

In other schools the situation is quite different. In these schools classroom teachers report they do have the primary responsibility for teaching at-risk children to read. In these schools classroom teachers integrate these children into the reading and language arts lessons, adapting instruction to better meet their needs. These teachers typically go out of their way to provide extra time and teaching to the at-risk children and often collaborate with the special teacher so that remedial and resource instruction supports and extends the classroom program (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1993; McGill-Franzen, 1994).

In both cases, teachers' beliefs about their professional responsibilities have been shaped by school district policies and administrators' attitudes and efforts. When a district neither requires nor seeks classroom teacher involvement in the development of an Individualized Education Plan for an included child labelled learning disabled, it is easy to see how classroom teachers would develop the belief that the child's education was not primarily their responsibility. When classroom teachers have little knowledge of the remedial reading lessons children receive — when there is no district policy and little concern for their collaboration in designing those lessons — it is easy see how classroom teachers would develop the sense that the literacy development of at-risk children is someone else's responsibility. When schools have no policy indicating an expectation for accelerated academic development of children participating in instructional support programs, it easy to understand why no one creates interventions that are sufficiently intensive to remedy the achievement lag some children experience.

If classroom teachers are to accept professional responsibility for teaching at-risk readers in their classrooms, school and district policies and practices that support their involvement and their efforts will need to be developed. Schools need to create a general sense that special programs are part of a unified plan of action addressing the needs of at-risk readers. Too often special teachers and special programs have simply existed in a school but were not really part of the school. Often these special personnel were not supervised by a building administrator. Often it was neither the administrator nor the classroom teachers who scheduled special teachers' work with children but someone at a district special programs office. In some cases special program personnel do not attend building staff meetings nor do they participate in staff development activities with classroom teachers. In too many cases school districts seem to have engaged in planning classroom and special programs curriculum and instruction as wholly separate entities. In these situations it is not surprising that classroom teachers felt little involvement with special programs and little responsibility for teaching the students who participate in those programs. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that administrators and teachers often feel special programs are not doing very well at meeting the needs of children or teachers.

Schools need to develop clear statements of policy that indicate that acceleration of academic development is an expected outcome for at-risk children. Too often schools offer clear policies that indicate that children who lag behind their peers in literacy development are not expected to catch up. In these cases it is not surprising that few teachers believe the goal for at-risk children is accelerated literacy development. When teachers do not believe that the goal is acceleration, they are unlikely to create instructional interventions that accelerate achievement. Thus, low-achieving children remain low achievers.

Sharing and collaborating. In order to create schools that work for at-risk readers, it will be necessary to create a stronger sense of shared responsibility than now exists in many schools. Shared responsibility is unlikely in schools where classroom and special program teachers share little knowledge of each other's instructional goals and practices. When two teachers working with the same children have little shared knowledge of each other's instruction, it is unlikely

that the children are participating in the most coherent and supportive instructional environment.

Developing shared knowledge of instructional practices in classroom and specialist teachers is a good starting point for enhancing a sense of shared responsibility. Collaborative development of shared goals along with a plan that describes a working relationship between classroom and special programs may be a critically important activity, especially in schools with large numbers of special program students (Allington & Broikou, 1988). But fostering more collaborative educational settings is neither easy or quickly accomplished. Thus, we offer several strategies for moving into more collaborative, more inclusive educational programs.

First, involve all teachers in staff meetings. Special program personnel cannot be expected to view themselves as part of a team effort if they are routinely excluded from the meetings of the regular education staff. Second, develop shared staff development sessions. Too often special program teachers attend separate workshops, often in other buildings, during staff development days. While there will be times when special program staff need to gather for informational and training sessions particularly targeted to their needs, generally staff development must include all members of the professional staff at the school. It may be useful to schedule special program staff presentations of their programs during staff meetings or staff development days. Similarly, special program staff often benefit from sessions offered by classroom teachers on their instructional programs.

A second set of activities involves getting special program staff into classrooms more often, even if for brief periods. For instance, when special program staff come to the classroom to pick up children who participate in their special pull-out instruction there are two immediate benefits. First, special program teachers acquire more information about the nature of the classroom instruction even when these visits are brief. Just coming into the room offers the opportunity to get a sense of the kinds of reading and language arts activities that are common. Likewise these visits provide glimpses of the classroom environment and organization. Second, this strategy of picking children up at their classrooms tends to reduce the amount of transition time spent in the special program classroom. Perhaps it is because some of the social talk occurs during the walk to the special program site, but we find children are engaged in academic work more quickly after walking with the specialist to the special program classroom. Thus, picking up children at their classroom provides double benefits.

Another activity that fosters shared knowledge is planning by classroom and special program teachers. This does not have to be a formal and scheduled activity to be effective. For instance, the use of a traveling notebook seems to work reasonably well to facilitate collaboration. The notebook can be just a simple spiral-bound notepad with a string run through the spiral binding and looped over a child's neck when leaving for special programs instruction. In the notebook the classroom teacher simply notes the classroom material being used and the pages that were the focus of the lesson that day. In addition, the classroom teacher might jot a comment about the child's performance (e.g., Tim had difficulty following the story line.) or a particular skill or strategy felt to need additional attention (e.g., Tim has real difficulty with long words). The special program teacher jots notes back to the classroom teacher (e.g., We worked on a Making-Big-Words activity today) and returns the notebook with the child after their instructional session. The point is that the notes do not have to be long nor complicated, especially if they are jotted down regularly.

A third activity is sharing lesson plans. In this case, the classroom teacher shares a copy of her lesson plan for reading and language arts with the special program teacher who uses that as one source of information in planning her instruction. Even better than simply sharing the plans is to sit together and jointly create the lessons to be offered in both situations. Of course, this requires time for both teachers to meet together, but in most schools such time is available both before and after the school day. However, if special program teachers work with children from many classrooms the task becomes more complicated.

A fourth strategy to foster collaboration is to create grade level or grade cluster teams made up of classroom teachers and specialists. For instance, if the K-2 teachers were a single team which met regularly to share instructional planning and small group discussions of strategies for better addressing the needs of at-risk children, then assigning several special teachers to the team serves a number of purposes. Specialist teachers have the opportunity to listen and learn from classroom teachers and vice-versa. As they listen both groups develop greater shared knowledge and an expanded repertoire of instructional modifications. The specialists assigned to the team work with children from the classrooms of other team members.

A final strategy that is being used more frequently is having special program teachers (e.g., reading teachers, speech therapists, resource room teachers, ESL teachers, etc.) provide their instructional support in the regular classroom rather than in a location down the hall. One goal of these "in-class" instructional support models is to improve classroom instruction through developing shared knowledge and creating more coherent instructional interventions. In addition, participating students should lose less instructional time in transition from one setting to another.

In-class instructional support services, whether remediation or special education, produce achievement gains at least as large as pull-out instruction without having a negative impact on the achievement of other students in the room (Goldberger, Meyers & Prunek, 1992; Sharpe, York & Knight, 1994). Most proponents argue more often from moral perspective: segregating at-risk children from their peers is wrong unless large benefits to the children can be demonstrated and such benefits have not usually been reported (Wills, 1986).

In our view, more important than location is the critical issue of providing children with access to high-quality instruction. But in-class, collaborative instructional models focused on enhancing achievement in the core curriculum of the classroom do, in fact, seem to offer the greatest promise for providing high-quality instruction

(and accumulating evidence of their effectiveness). Nonetheless, we see variety in the design of instructional support programs for at-risk children as a simple necessity. We would have schools offer instructional support programs that provided flexibility in intensity, location, schedule, emphasis, and so on. In other words, no single program design can possibly be expected to meet the needs of all children. That said, our emphasis would be on creating responsive, in-class support, collaboratively planned and offered by classroom and special teachers.

These "in-class" efforts take several forms but all seem to result in greater collaboration between classroom and special teachers (Geizheiser, Meyers & Pruzek, 1992). In some cases the in-class services look very much like the down the hall services but are offered in the classroom. For instance, a learning disability resource teacher comes into the room and has two eligible LD boys join her in a corner of the room at a small table. There she proceeds to work on a skill lesson the boys have been doing in the classroom. When the scheduled time period is up, the special program teacher sends the boys back to their seats and departs. We call this the in-class pull-aside model and cannot usually recommend it. A second form of in-class special services involves the special program teacher coming into the room and moving to the desks of the eligible children to work briefly with each one on the tasks before them. The special teacher moves about the room meeting with each eligible child, assisting and supporting and then moves on to another until the scheduled period of time is over. While this strategy can be useful, it does not always provide sufficient support to accelerate achievement. A third form has the special program teacher and the classroom teacher actually team-teaching in the room. At times the special program teacher may teach the whole class, and the classroom teacher moves about working with individual children. At other times they break the children into groups and each works with one group. At other times they literally co-teach and model, demonstrate, explain and offer individual support simultaeously. In this case, there are often greater benefits to at-risk children than in the earlier examples but learning to team teach is harder to accomplish.

There are, undoubtedly, a number of other patterns for organizing school efforts in order to achieve a more coherent and effective literacy instructional program for at-risk children. At the core of any attempt to achieve such programs will be the need to foster the development of substantial shared knowledge between classroom teachers and any support teachers that work with the children from those classrooms. The primary goal must remain improving the quality of classroom instruction. Schools can be designed so that teacher collaboration is infrequent, but we can also redesign schools that foster and support collaborative activity. Collaboration between classroom teachers and instructional support teachers is essential to reduce the risk some children face in elementary schools today.

Summary

Improving our schools requires that classroom instruction improve. Effective classroom teachers are the only absolutely essential element of an effective school. In other words, one can imagine an effective school without a group of remedial teachers, without a school psychologist, without a gifted and talented teacher, without a social worker, and even without an administrator. Everyone else in the school is employed simply to enhance the quality of classroom instruction. There is little evidence that support staff roles are currently defined with a primary focus on improving classroom instruction.

If schools are to become more effective then either the roles require redefinition or the support staff positions should be considered for elimination. In other words, a question that needs to be asked is: "What could we purchase with the special program funds that will be most likely to enhance the quality of classroom instruction for at-risk children? What sorts of expenditures will benefit these children most?" When special programs staff seem not to provide much in the way of academic benefit for children they serve nor seem to much improve classroom instruction, then it is time to consider other ways the funds might be spent.

If schools are to become more effective then either the roles require redefinition or the support staff positions should be considered for elimination.

For too long American educational policy has simply added more and more specialists to the staff of the elementary school, especially those elementary schools serving large concentrations of low-income children. Little attention was paid to the potential interrelationships or conflicts that might arise from this milieu of additional personnel. In some cases these additions have resulted in school days that are so fragmented and classrooms where many children come and go so often that running an effective classroom instructional program has become almost impossible. We cannot maintain the current segregated and fragmented collection of instructional programs and efforts and expect to ever provide the optimum benefit to children with special instructional needs.

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Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning: Voices from English

Jacqueline L. Marino

ABSTRACT

Interdisciplinary instruction has the potential to motivate students, make abstract ideas concrete, reinforce learning through multiple connections, and foster greater collaboration among teachers. Yet, anyone who has responded to the call of a colleague to help design an interdisciplinary unit knows the task is a challenging one. In this article, the insights of George Henry, Peter Elbow, Garth Boomer, Louise Rosenblatt and James Britton are offered to help educators meet that challenge.

In Eve Merriam's delightful picture book, *The Wise Woman and Her Secret*, a young girl succeeds in finding the secret of wisdom. To become wise, she discovers, one must learn "to be curious – to take the time to look closely, to use all your senses to see and touch and taste and smell and hear. To keep on wandering and wondering" (Merriam, 1991). This story could be a metaphor for both the promise and the problems of interdisciplinary teaching. It has the power to evoke curiosity, encourage personal investigation, and arouse sensibilities; yet, unless the parameters are clearly defined, it can also lead to aimless wandering and unfocused wondering.

Some direction for how to focus interdisciplinary study can be found in the professional literature. Jacobs (1989), for example, suggests beginning with an abstract concept that has relevance in a number of disciplines (e.g., *identity or interdependence*). Teachers then brainstorm associations in each subject area, establish guiding questions, and design activities that might serve as a lens for viewing the different disciplines. But as Jacobs herself has warned, some activities may trivialize the topic under study, resulting in a "potpourri" of tasks and readings that fail to illuminate either the separate disciplines or the threads that bind them. Without a coherent plan, developing an interdisciplinary unit is much like trying to eat cotton candy: just when you think you have the wisps under control, the whole thing dissolves, and in the end you're not sure what it is you have digested.

Although models of integration can vary widely according to their purpose in the classroom, some of the best advice has come from voices within our own discipline. This is hardly surprising, since English as a discipline is grounded in language and learning theory. Yet few curricular models do more than pay lip service to these underpinnings. They may, for example, exhort teachers to include wide reading or ask students to write for different purposes and audiences, but without defining what that might mean or how those activities are intended to enrich one's knowledge of the concept under study. It is this attention to language and learning that the following researchers and educators have contributed to the discussion on interdisciplinary study, whether intentionally or not. Taken together, their ideas may bring ideological support to the design of integrated units, as well as provide a framework for organizing instructional activities within those units.

1. Aim for concept development.

A concept is a structure
of relations continually growing.
George Henry, 1974

In his provocative book *Teaching Reading As Concept Development* (1974), Henry urges literature teachers to provide numerous opportunities for students to practice "striving for connectedness," a process that involves both the discovery of relations and the invention of tentative structures. Henry reminds us that with any real learning the terrain is constantly shifting, forcing us to analyze each separate experience, embrace some aspects of the experience and reject others, revise our thinking to accommodate the new information and apply the generalizations thus created to other concepts, events or texts. Whether it is a child's growing understanding of democracy or a teacher's evolving definition of whole language, understanding grows as the learner grows.

Henry's ideas suggest that in a carefully-designed interdisciplinary unit, each new learning experience will not only contribute to subsequent experiences but will also build on prior ones, perhaps even contradicting them. One might, for example, assign the poetry of the world wars in Foss's (1990) book by the same title or the letters in *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam* (Edelman, 1985) to prompt young readers to discover relations and create generalizations about war and its effects. Henry's notion of reading as concept development is an argument for assigning texts and activities that force the search for both commonality and dissonance. A popular classroom poster reinforces this argument with a quotation from Einstein: "Wondering occurs when an experience comes into conflict with a world of concepts already sufficiently fixed within us."

Henry's work also validates the study of some themes in more than one grade, with later study designed to challenge previously-acquired understandings. Thus an interdisciplinary unit on weather and climate might address, among other things, the nature and beauty of cloud formations in the primary grades, the effects of weather on our lives at the middle school level, and the evolution and importance of meteorology as a science at the senior high level.

2. Begin with a concrete particular.

The sort of nondisciplinary course I advocate – to supplement disciplinary courses, not replace them – is one in which a single concrete particular is seen from the point of view of the widest range of conflicting models, metaphors, hypotheses, conceptual schemes, sets, and disciplines.

Peter Elbow, 1986

According to Elbow (1986), school learning tends to emphasize the application of "academic concepts to academic contexts." Echoing Henry's emphasis on connections, Elbow challenges teachers to foster *real* learning, which requires individuals to apply concepts learned in school to a broad array of experiences outside of school and to invent new concepts never encountered in school (Elbow, 1986). To help learners achieve these connections between academic and nonacademic experiences, Elbow advocates what he calls *nondisciplinary* instruction.

As Elbow describes it, nondisciplinary teaching begins with a current event, a critical moment in history, or other "concrete particular" (e.g., the arms' summit, an event in the life of Gandhi, the death of Beatle John Lennon). Students are introduced to the event (or even assist in its selection); they then probe it deeply for its historical, cultural, sociological, or other dimensions and implications. This examination of a concrete particular from the perspectives of a wide range of disciplines yields a richer understanding of the particular concept under study **and** more ingrained strategies for making meaning of every other concept the individual encounters; in other words, real learning.

Organizing a unit of study around a concrete particular has several advantages over the traditional topical or thematic focus. The principal advantage is that it is likely to foster an attitude toward inquiry. For example, an investigation of Hurricane Andrew would add focus and immediacy to the study of weather and climate, providing a concrete reason for learning about hazardous weather, its causes and effects. Nor is the notion of a concrete particular limited to a content area topic. Students might well be motivated to enter the world of Thoreau's *Walden* (1854, 1995) after reflecting on E.B. White's (1978) visit to Walden Pond and the questions about Thoreau and 19th century America that are prompted by that essay. Clearly, examination of a concrete particular has the potential for enriching understanding of both the event and its larger context, for "the student will learn to see and feel the concrete as an instance of the huge range of different and conflicting concepts" (Elbow, 1986, p. 21).

3. Negotiate the curriculum.

Negotiating the curriculum means deliberately planning to invite students to contribute to, and to modify, the educational program, so that they will have a real investment both in the learning journey and in the outcomes.

Garth Boomer, 1982

I like to think of a negotiated curriculum as being like the monthly meetings of my camera club, where the program is partly determined by the needs and interests of the members and partly by those who know what it takes to be a good photographer. Members engage in their own learning by preparing photographs for the club competitions, critiquing each others' photographs, and attending workshops to learn the fine points of photography. At the same time, professional photographers offer suggestions and techniques and display their best photographs. Novices and experts are together making meaning of those experiences they wish to convey to others.

It could be said that my camera club is based on "constructivist pedagogy, "...in which the roles of the teacher and learner are transformed to support the construction of meaning, rather than the transmission of knowledge" (Applebee, 1991, p. 553). Often, this process begins with member questions.

Several educators have suggested that student-generated questions provide a way into a negotiated curriculum. Smith (1978),for example, highlights the importance of personal inquiry when he defines comprehension as the discovery of answers to one's own cognitive questions. Student questions are at the core of reader response theory, which postulates that in reading, meaning is neither in the reader nor in the text, but emerges in the transaction between the two (Probst, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1987; Scholes, 1985). Student questions serve to acknowledge the transactional nature of the reading process by validating a reader's unique experiences and honoring individual interpretations.

Wiggins (1987) reminds us that knowledge is not a collection of facts but the product of inquiry. Thus, he proposes organizing a curriculum around "essential questions... that go to the heart of a discipline," much like Bruner's (1965) *Man: A Course of Study*, which explored how such humanizing forces as tool making, language, and social organization affected humanity's evolution. Beginning a unit of study with essential questions suggests that the teacher's role is one of setting up the conditions that are most likely to prompt questions of significance, then supporting students' investigations with appropriate guidance, materials, and resources. In the Hurricane Andrew unit, for example, students could not help but be moved by a newspaper appeal that begins, "South Florida says, 'We will rebuild.' Will you help?" and describes the catastrophic results of this natural disaster. Asked to write a personal response and to list questions that come to mind, students will almost certainly ask what it is like to live through a hurricane, what causes them, how they get their names, and whether their devastating effects can be prevented. It is only a short distance from these questions to such broader issues as how weather is observed and tracked and why scientific thought about the atmosphere and weather evolved the way it did.

Similarly, the E.B. White essay (1978) could prompt a number of significant questions about Thoreau: Who was he and what did he stand for? What was it about 19th century life that made life at Walden Pond both appealing and difficult? What contemporary and historical figures have shared Thoreau's visions and beliefs? What would Thoreau think of Walden Pond (and America) today? These questions are not unlike those found "at the end of the chapter," but when questions begin in the minds of the students, the search for answers brings greater reward to the seekers.

4. Summon personal connections through literature.

Literature...deals with all that is basic in human life, from the most humble to the most ideal... [O]nce there has been a lived-through evocation from the text, students can be led toward increasing self-critical

and sound interpretation, and enhanced capacity to relate the experience to literary, historical, and social contexts.

Rosenblatt, 1980

Rosenblatt's words highlight the value of including a variety of literary forms and genres in interdisciplinary study. Observing an experience from the perspective of a poet, a participant and a reporter, for example, demands that most important kind of connectedness: the link with our personal sensibilities that must precede any critical response to the world around us.

Reading a variety of genres requires students to make their own meanings by piecing together fact and fantasy, report and interpretation, perspectives from their own and other cultures. Picture books can prompt questions about complex topics. Traditional literature can spark discussion about human problems and solutions and reveal the beliefs and values of a culture. Biography and historical fiction help students place real people and events in their cultural and historical contexts. Original sources such as diaries, journals, and letters bring life and immediacy to historical events. Informational books and articles bring to topics a focus and voice that is usually missing from textbooks. And in poetry, says Britton (1982), "the penetrative and constructive powers of the imagination find expression" (p. 21), demonstrating for all learners that every experience evokes an aesthetic response.

Surely the Hurricane Andrew unit would be strengthened by the use of Booth and Lemieux's (1990) book of poetry, *Voices on the Wind* or the Hottentot poem, "Song for the Sun That Disappeared behind the Rainclouds" (Koch & Farrell, 1985). Picture books such as *Rain Player* (Wisniewski, 1991) and *A January Fog Will Freeze a Hog* (Davis & Wallner, 1977) would also enrich this study, the former for its look at the role of weather and climate in ancient cultures, and the latter for its suggestion that much of our early American weather folklore is based on careful observation by people whose livelihood depended on weather conditions. Further appreciation for the effects of hazardous weather would be gained by reading DeTrobriand's (1868) first person account of a Dakota storm and comparing similar accounts from survivors of Hurricane Andrew.

> Our personal sensibilities... must precede any critical response to the world around us.

Similarly, the study of Thoreau's *Walden* (1854, 1995) would be enriched by the examination and contemplation of texts such as Roach's (1980) picture book, *Down to Earth at Walden*; Emerson's (1992) biography, *Henry Thoreau: As Remembered by a Young Friend*; nonfiction works about self-sufficiency such as LaBastille's (1976) *Woodswoman*; and Thoreau's own poetry and journal entries. Reading a variety of genres provides learners with numerous opportunities to analyze, synthesize, and generalize, as well as to revise their understandings of the concepts under study. Further, students who have broad exposure to multiple genres will be more aware of the role of purpose, audience, voice, and other aspects of the writer's craft in their own composing.

5. Invite learning through purposeful uses of language.

Put at its broadest, we master language by using it to make the most of our lives.

Britton, 1982

Interdisciplinary instruction is enhanced when students are encouraged to develop their understanding of a significant concept through the study of a concrete particular and are invited to respond to literature that either elicits or responds to their own questions. However, these activities still can lead to the "potpourri problem" if the reading, writing, listening, and speaking they do along the way is haphazard and unfocused. One way of guiding students' learning and lending unity to the study is to design activities that correspond to everyday uses of language.

The functions of language in our lives have been variously described by Halliday (1973); Britton (1982); Rosenblatt (1978, 1987); and Berthoff (1981), among others. One useful synthesis of this work is that of The New York State Education Department, who in defining what students should be able to do as a result of language instruction and experience, have based their Standards for English Language Arts on the work of these individuals and identified four broad purposes for using language: for literary response and expression, for information and understanding, for critical analysis and evaluation, and for social interaction (See DeFabio, 1992, for a fuller description of this project). As suggested below, incorporating language for each of these purposes in a unit of study can help students learn the content, learn about language, and reflect on their learning.

Language for Literary Response and Expression

Attention to literary uses of language is important for learners at all levels and in all disciplines. I have already described the value of reading or listening to literature for its capacity to prompt personal connections with the concepts under study. Reading or hearing literary texts allows students to examine their own lives and thoughts through the lens of another, while creating their own poems, stories, personal essays, and other literary texts helps students to discover what they know and believe and to recognize the power of language to evoke response from others. As Peterson and Eeds (1990) remind us, students "must never be shorted on their personal aesthetic experience... Personal response is not only valued, it should be the base for all extended meaning "(p. 61).

Language for Information and Understanding

Although acquiring and conveying information may draw on work in other kinds of discourse (e.g., dialogue, narrative, or personal reflection), this use of language is dominated by an emphasis on facts and generalized, explicit statements intended for a public audience (Moffett & Wagner, 1992). Informational text may take the form of an article or a lecture, a memo or a manual, a poster or a pamphlet, a videodisc or a documentary, to name just a few. Principal sources of information, according to Moffett and Wagner, include the *environment, experimentation, people,* and *records.* When students have many opportunities to use these sources to create their own informational texts for real audiences, they have a better sense of the nature and worth of documents created by others.

Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

"Facts are not interesting. It's the point of view on facts which is important," says the noted photojournalist, Henri Cartier-Bresson (Curl, 1991). The use of language for critical analysis and evaluation refers to the ability to step back from an experience, question it from a variety of perspectives, and assume or recognize a point of view. It is language that takes a stand, such as one finds in essays, editorials, critical reviews, exposes, or philosophical poetry. Interdisciplinary learning is enhanced when students have many occasions to express opinions, examine the critical issues inherent in a discipline, anticipate the attitudes and arguments of others, resolve opposing viewpoints, generalize from a collection of data, and use and generate criteria for evaluation.

Language for Social Interaction

Although all uses of language emerge from and rely on social contexts, the purposeful use of language for social interaction is beneficial in its own right. Success in school depends in large part on the ability of students from varying backgrounds to live and work together. As adults, success also requires the ability to listen respectfully, initiate and sustain conversation, make others feel comfortable, participate productively in group activity, and appreciate the opinions of others even while disagreeing with those opinions. For our students to become the kinds of adults who value and practice these behaviors, our classrooms must be places where student interactions help to nurture interpersonal relationships and further the making of knowledge. Interdisciplinary study provides many opportunities for students to hone their social interaction skills by sharing those aspects of their lives that are related to the topic under study, collaborating on a common task, extending and responding to invitations, reacting respectfully to each others' work, and negotiating meanings with other members of an interpretive community.

"Language needs real subjects, and subjects need real language," note Moffett and Wagner (1992). The work of Britton and other language theorists suggests that interdisciplinary study is strengthened by consistent and focused attention to the literary, informational, critical, and social functions of language. When students are asked to create and respond to literary texts, acquire and convey information, analyze experiences and issues from a variety of perspectives, and communicate with a broad range of audiences as part of their investigations, they are likely to learn more about their subject and more about their language.

> ...Interdisciplinary... curriculum... is at once personal, negotiated, and enriching.

Conclusion

Interdisciplinary instruction has the potential to motivate students, make abstract ideas concrete, reinforce learning through multiple connections, and foster greater collaboration among teachers. Yet, designing an interdisciplinary unit is a challenging task. The ideas of Henry, Elbow, Boomer, Rosenblatt, and Britton can help educators meet that challenge. It would be tempting to transform their advice into a one-size-fits-all model for interdisciplinary instruction; however, the purpose for invoking their work is not to propose a sequence of activities but to remind educators of some features of language and learning that can provide theoretical support for the selection of those activities. Thus, one way of focusing the wondering and wandering that is stimulated by interdisciplinary study is to design units that provide opportunities for students to develop connected ideas about a concept through the study of a specific instance of that concept, use a variety of literary genres to elicit questions that serve as the impetus for student investigation, and incorporate real purposes for using language to think about and to share the results of that investigation. The result is a curriculum that is at once personal, negotiated, and enriching.

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For All Time

How beautifully
it all starts
with a scribble
or two,
that first
connection
between
what paper
and pen do.

One mark,
a small constant,
recurring
time
and again,
in each moment
to be expanded,
with every touch
of a pen.

Sigmund A. Boloz

For the past twenty-four years Sigmund A. Boloz has worked with children from the Navajo Nation. Since 1980 he has been principal of Ganado Primary School.

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Using the Internet as a Medium for Multicultural Field Trips

Joseph E. Zimmer

ABSTRACT

The Internet is providing educators with new and exciting ways to promote multiculturalism in classrooms. As new sites open around the world, teachers and students will have access to global information that can enhance multicultural literacy projects. This article outlines the benefits of Internet exploration and provides educators with a brief catalog of sites where they can take their students on a virtual world tour.

We would all love to be able to take our students around the world to expose them to its varied peoples, places, and ideas. The experience would broaden their knowledge base and allow them to enter into the discourse of the literate world from a number of new perspectives. Beyond the benefits to language development and comprehension, knowledge of the world would also open students' minds, reduce prejudice, and foster critical thinking.

Imagine such a field trip. We may start by exploring our own nation, its cultures, and peoples. Then perhaps a trip to foreign lands, collecting information, gaining new perspectives. We would visit landmarks, see great works of art and architecture, and experience societies different from our own. Such a trip would change our students' lives and we would all reap the cognitive benefits of expanded schemata when we arrived home.

> The Internet... has the potential to carry information on a grand scale, much greater than any library...

Until recently, this dreamy trip could only be taken through a good library. Such a library would have to be like the world — forever expanding, forever fresh, and forever current. An unfortunate reality of teaching is that money and other constraints drastically limit the extent of our field trips and the size of our libraries.

There is, however, a new, rapidly expanding technology that is making student trips around the world an everyday experience: the Internet. The Internet, a prototype of the "information superhighway" envisioned by computer scientists and futurists, connects computer networks around the world and has the potential to carry information on a grand scale, much greater than any library, television channel, or newspaper ever could. Chances are that your school is connected already or is considering connection to the Internet.

The Benefits of Internet Use

Glasser (1990) argued that survival, love, power, fun, and freedom are the five basic needs of human beings. Internet use is an avenue to power, fun, and freedom for students.

Once users learn basic navigation of the system, which can be done almost completely with a mouse, they have the power to travel to any destination they choose. One of the benefits of connecting to the World Wide Web (WWW) is hypertext, a cross-referencing system which allows the user to "jump" from one Internet link to another with a click of a mouse button. For example, while reading about American presidents, you may see the name "George Washington" in a different color. This different color indicates that if you move your mouse pointer to "George Washington" and click, the program will transfer you to another document that deals more directly with George Washington. These cross-references are common and can take the user on millions of different paths of information. Similar to a "choose your own adventure" book, hypertext links become decision points where students can stay where they are or jump to another connected site. The power to create one's own path through text fosters ownership in all students, but it can be particularly beneficial for those students who, through reading difficulties or academic failure, feel powerless in traditional reading situations.

Skipping around the world through fiber optics lines can be a great deal of fun. Students quickly get the feeling that they can "beam themselves" (in a Star Trek sense) across the globe. There is a feeling of anticipation when they jump to a new site and watch the pictures slowly appear on the screen. Every link is a new adventure.

The global nature of the WWW allows students to personalize their travels by exploring their heritage or getting information on subjects that interest them. Students are no longer bound by the walls of the school, and even the most reluctant readers will find something on the Internet that interests them.

Internet use has cognitive benefits as well. Summarizing brain research, Caine and Caine (1991) argued that the search for meaning is innate and occurs through patterning. The links between information sources model very closely the way the brain processes information. Thus, exploring the Internet is one of the most natural ways to feed this inborn curiosity. As Blanchard and Rottenberg

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(1990) described, hypertext information is represented, not linearly, but in associational clusters or scaffolds, allowing a pattern seeking brain to create unique, personalized connections.

Getting Connected

The quickest way for a busy teacher to find out more about the Internet is to ask someone who is really "into it." These people are everywhere, and most are enthusiatically willing to give you a tour of this wonderful intellectual jewel. After a quick tour of the WWW, one of the most popular applications on the Internet, you will no doubt see many possibilities for yourself and your classroom.

In order to enjoy the full complement of features on the Internet, users need two things: an Internet connection and a viewer. The Internet connection is usually purchased and maintained by a school district or university. It consists of fiber optic telephone lines and software networked to computers. Viewers are large sets of programs that are loaded into an individual computer or network server. These programs let the user read text, see pictures, hear recordings, and even see videos others have placed on the Internet. For example, a basic viewer called Lynx allows the user to read text only. More complex viewers, such as Mosaic and Netscape, provide more enhanced video and audio capabilities. Newer, more enhanced programs are constantly being released and experimental versions of these programs are often offered free. It is worth the time and effort to load the more complex programs because the pictures and sounds raise the quality of the experiences for you and your students exponentially. Many computer teachers and media specialists are familiar with these resources and can guide you through setting up the programs.

The Internet's Impact on Multicultural Literacy Education

One of the impressions most seasoned educators get from their first exposure to the WWW is the incredible power and global scope of the network. Information can be gathered on virtually every topic directly from its source. For example, NASA has a Web site where students can learn about space from astronomers, astronauts, and aerospace engineers.

Educators also see the potential of the Web for improving multicultural awareness among students. Since students can directly link to other nations and cultures, they get a better sense of the world than was ever possible through traditional means. They begin to see others as persons like themselves yet with different perspectives.

Many educators including Diakiw (1990), Norton (1990) and Walker-Dalhouse (1992) have documented the need for multicultural literature in classrooms. As Norton (1990) aptly stated; "Developing understanding of our literary heritage whether it is European, African, Native American, Hispanic or Asian is one of the most important tasks for educators" (p. 28). With this in mind, the WWW was surveyed for sites to help teachers improve student awareness of the world's nations, ideas and cultures. The following short catalog is by no means conclusive. It is

The Ark Internet Crew with RPI graduate student.

Photograph courtesy of Mary Theresa Streck.

intended as a starting point for teachers who wish to begin exploring the multicultural potential of the WWW with their students. Each site is provided with a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) which is its computer address. This often long string of commands tells the viewer which programs and networks are likely to have the information wanted. In the fast moving world of computer applications, documents are moved and addresses change quickly. If you can't find one of these links at the stated address, try using one of the navigational aids available, such as the WWW Worm(http://www.cs.colorado.edu/home/mcbryan/WWWW.html). This will allow you to search for the sites using key words.

General Resources of Multicultural Sites

The Smithsonian Institution (http://www.si.edu/)

During the past year, the Smithsonian Institution invested great resources in the construction of an elaborate site on the WWW. Among the services available on-line are text and video tours of most of the Smithsonian museums, the ability to interact with staff members and curators, and various activities designed to explore the Smithsonian's resources. Addresses are provided so that teachers and students can contact the museums directly. The Smithsonian site is fertile ground for expanding the multicultural literacy of students.

The Library of Congress (http://lcweb.loc.gov/homepage/lchp.html)

The Library of Congress is growing source of multicultural reference materials on the Internet. The Library of Congress exhibits are more complete than the Smithsonian exhibits, often going deeper into the subjects they examine. Several current exhibits of the Library deal specifically with multicultural issues.

The Electronic Embassy (http://www.embassy.org)

This site is intended to be a central electronic page where users can go to get on-line information provided by embassies on the WWW. As the Electronic Embassy grows, students and teachers will gain access to information from foreign sources on their press and culture, education, commerce and trade, consular information, travel and tourism, and employment. For those teachers who have their students write away for tourism information on different countries, the Electronic Embassy can provide similar information faster.

City Net (http://city.net)

The most comprehensive guide to foreign communities on the Internet, City Net can take students to nearly 1000 foreign cities and over 500 other destinations. This immense guide provides in-depth descriptions of the government, geography, trade, employment, education, and industry of the cities. It presents maps, pictures and United States travel information, and gives the user a clear sense of culture in nearly every city, region, and nation in the world. Students and teachers could spend hours taking a virtual world tour at this site.

The Global Network Navigator (http://nearnet.gnn.com/gnn/GNNhome.html)

The Global Network Navigator is a comprehensive guide to many of the services available on the Internet. While GNN can lead the user to information on everything from personal finance to on-line shopping, GNN's Whole Internet Catalog (http://gnn.com/gnn/wic/index.html) leads users to a number of cross-references to multicultural sites.

"Humanities and Social Sciences"(http://gnn.com/gnn/wic/hum.toc.html) is the section of the Whole Internet Catalog that appears to be the most fertile for multicultural exploration. Among the subjects explored in the Humanities and Social Sciences section are Anthropology, Black and African Studies, Economics, History, Languages, Literature, and Women's Studies.

African Culture Sites

The Anacostia Museum of the Smithsonian Institution (http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/anacost/homepage/anachome.htm)

This museum focuses on African-American history and culture. The museum concentrates on information and artifacts that document African-American life in the South (especially around Washington, DC), but it also examines more contemporary urban issues from an African-American perspective. The site contains some short text and picture exhibits that preview the museum's holdings. Examples of current exhibits include: Black Mosaic: Community, Race, and Ethnicity Among Black Immigrants in Washington, DC, and Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Rise of Black Churches in Eastern American Cities, 1740-1877.

The National Museum of African Art (http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/africart/homepage/nmafa.htm)

This museum focuses on African art collected south of the Sahara. This site offers a rather thorough introduction to the museum and its collections. Students can use an electronic map and take a virtual tour of the exhibits. Examples of current exhibits include: Images of Power and Identity, and The Ancient Nubian City of Kerma, 2500-1500 B.C.

African-American Culture and History (http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/African.American/intro.html)

This site is an excellent source of information on the history of African-Americans in the United States. It focuses on the four

themes of Colonization of Freed Slaves, Abolition, Migrations, and African-Americans in the WPA. Through the exhibit students and teachers can read in detail about these themes and experience a large number of visual displays that reinforce the text.

African Studies (http://www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/AS.html)

The University of Pennsylvania has set up this site as a clearinghouse of information on Black and African studies. The site includes links to a multitude of other African sites on the Web, direct feeds from Africa, country-by-country information on Africa, and a K-12 African Studies Guide.

Asian Culture Sites

The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution (http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/freer/homepage/start.htm)

The Sackler Gallery examines Asian art and culture. This site includes an introduction to the gallery, a taste of some of the art contained in the gallery, and hypertext links (cross-references) to other sites dealing with Asian art and culture. Examples of current exhibits include: The Power of the Pen: Islamic Calligraphy in the Fourteenth Century, and Contemporary Porcelain From Japan.

Revelations from the Russian Archives (http://sunsite.unc.edu/expo/soviet.exhibit/soviet.archive.html)

This site helps students and teachers take advantage of the continual opening of Russian society. The site allows users to choose their own path through a complex of themed displays revealing Russian history and culture in the twentieth century. The flexibility of the tours makes it a wonderful place to wander and helps those who are looking for information on a specific topic as well.

The Russian Church and Native Alaskan Cultures (http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/russian/s l a.html)

This site allows students and teachers to read about the efforts of Russian missionaries in Alaska with several opportunities to look at artifacts and original documents.

European Culture Sites

Creating French Culture: Treasures from the Bibliothèque nationale de France (http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/bnf/bnf0001.html)

This site allows students and teachers to explore many of the exhibits of the French national library. The site is set up as a themed tour that takes students through topics such as Monarchs and Monasteries, The Path to Royal Absolutism, The Rise and Fall of the Absolute Monarchy, and From Empire to Democracy.

Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture (http://sunsite.unc.edu/expo/Vatican.exhibit/Vatican.exhibit.html)

This address gives users tours of the newly opened electronic Vatican Library. By creating a virtual library, the Vatican is making available documents that were often unavailable to even the most privileged scholars in the past because of the risk of theft and mutilation. The library contains a great deal of religious history but is also a great source of information on Renaissance life and culture.

Sites Dealing With the Holocaust

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (http://www.ushmm.org)

The most valuable resource at this site is a query service where users can search through the archives of the museum using key words. Even obscure searches reveal a wealth of original documents related to the Holocaust that could not otherwise be accessed without a trip to the museum itself. This is a fantastic resource for units on World War II and the Holocaust that not only benefits students but allows teachers to reproduce original documents that will enhance their classroom presentations.

A Cybrary of the Holocaust (http://www.best.com/~mddunn/cybrary/)

This virtual library is one of the most comprehensive and user-friendly sources of information on the Holocaust on the WWW. Users can access factual information, stories of survivors, entire books, bibliographies, and a variety of links to other Holocaust resources.

Other Cultural Sites

The National Museum of the American Indian (http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/amerind/nmai/start.htm)

This site provides users with a variety of activities with the museum's collections. Students can really get a sense for Native culture and literature. A valuable resource at this site is a hypertext link to other native sites in the WWW. Current exhibits at the National Museum of the American Indian include: Creation's Journey: Masterworks of

Table 1: Summary of Sites

General Resources

1. The Smithsonian Institution
   http://www.si.edu/
2. The Library of Congress
   http://lcweb.loc.gov/homepage/lchp.html
3. The Electronic Embassy
   http://www.embassy.org
4. City Net
   http://city.net
5. The Global Network Navigator
   http://nearnet.gnn.com/gnn/GNNhome.html

African Culture Sites

1. The Anacostia Museum of the Smithsonian Institution
   http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/anacost/homepage/anachome.htm
2. The National Museum of African Art
   http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/africart/homepage/nmafa.htm
3. African-American Culture and History
   http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/African.American/intro.html
4. African Studies
   http://www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/AS.html

Asian Culture Sites

1. The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution
   http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/freer/homepage/start.htm
2. Revelations from the Russian Archives
   http://sunsite.unc.edu/expo/soviet.exhibit/soviet.archive.html
3. The Russian Church and Native Alaskan Cultures
   http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/russian/s1a.html

European Culture Sites

1. Creating French Culture: Treasures from the Bibliothèque nationale de France
   http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/bnf/bnf0001.html
2. Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture
   http://sunsite.unc.edu/expo/Vatican.exhibit/Vatican.exhibit.html

States Dealing With the Holocaust

1. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
   http://www.ushmm.org
2. A Cybrary of the Holocaust
   http://www.best.com/~mddunn/cybrary/

Other Cultural Sites

1. The National Museum of the American Indian
   http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/amerind/nmai/start.htm
2. The Arctic Circle
   http://www.lib.uconn.edu:80/ArcticCircle/index.html
3. 1492 Exhibit
   http://sunsite.unc.edu/expo/1492.exhibit/intro.html
4. The Human Languages Page
   http://www.willamette.edu/~tjones/Languages-Page.html
5. The Women's Resource Project

Native American Identity and Belief, and All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture.

The Arctic Circle (http://www.lib.uconn.edu:80/ArcticCircle/index.html)

This site was set up by the University of Connecticut to provide information on issues concerning the nations of the Arctic Circle. It includes links to information on natural resources, history and culture, social equity and environmental justice. It also includes a "virtual classroom" where students can learn about people and places in the Arctic Circle.

1492 Exhibit (http://sunsite.unc.edu/expo/1492.exhibit/intro.html)

The Library of Congress placed this site on the WWW to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' voyage to the New World. While it presents much of the standard history of the event, it also explores the cultures and peoples of the New World and asks students to explore questions regarding the impact of American colonization.

The Human Languages Page (http://www.willamette.edu/~tjones/Languages-Page.html)

This site is a clearinghouse for resources related to the languages and cultures of the world. Students can look at, hear, and receive basic lessons in dozens of different languages. Links to cultural information are also available.

The Women's Resource Project (http://sunsite.unc.edu/cheryb/women/wshome.html)

This is an extensive source of links related to the personal and professional development of women. Information on women's health issues, gender equity, and AIDS are among the issues catalogued at this site. Teachers should use caution with this site because, at times, it contains topics on women's sexuality intended for mature users.

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Summary

Giving students access to the Internet is one of the most beneficial and cost-effective ways of providing them with interactive experiences on a global scale. This short catalog is merely a starting point for virtual world field trips, geographic studies and cultural travels that will expand students' horizons, develop a better appreciation of others in the world, and prepare them for further study. Once these sites are explored, hypertext links provide opportunities for creative teachers and students to find millions of pieces of information that will enhance their multicultural studies. Reluctant readers and writers will benefit from the active nature of their discoveries, and all students will be introduced to the technology that will form a large part of their adult lives.

> ...access to the Internet is one of the most beneficial... ways of providing ...interactive experiences on a global scale.

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On The Idea

To live in the place where spiders
sway like moons on dazzling cords,
where flowers' cold red fire
grows to swallow blue sky's sun—

A woman walks from a poet's mind
along the beach where song is breaking
waves from a living reef of shells
and coral pulsing dark and light.
To him she turns,
to him she talks
to him she reaches one smooth hand
on which an emerald glistens—

in words we risk everything
in silence hunger listens—

To live in the place where dusk
falls soft as fingers in warm sand,
where brown birds' flashing wings
splash salt water into stars—

The poet eats his tangerines
and offers one to no one there
and swallows music sweet with seeds
and hears the woman sing again.
To her he breathes,
to her he moves,
to her he spins from deepest belly
blossoms shoreline night —

connection is perfection's face;
in language we find sight

- Katharyn Howd Machan

Dr. Katharyn Howd Machan is a faculty member of the Writing Program of Ithaca College where her speciality is writing children's literature. Her poems have appeared in many magazines and anthologies, and she is the author of 16 published collections, including most recently The Kitchen of Your Dreams for which she won the Goodman Award.

Dialogues About Literacy Education in Russia

Linda Pratt

ABSTRACT

Literacy education reforms have been unleashed by recent fundamental political changes in the former Soviet Union. This article chronicles various Russian educators' views on changes in literacy theory and practice. They tell of a potentially significant change in literacy education in which teachers devote substantially more time and effort to individual students rather than to entire classes. This fundamental shift in emphasis may prove to be one of the most profound transformations to occur in the Russian educational system. Scholars and educators consequently have an invaluable opportunity to observe and study this new "revolution" and its impact on a massive educational system and society that is striving to reduce the influence of totalitarian institutions and increase that of democratic ones.

As a member of the Citizens' Ambassador Reading Education Delegation, I visited Russia for the first time in 1992. Although my stay was brief, it was evident that the political changes evolving within Russia were dramatically influencing the thoughts and actions of literacy educators. This headlong move away from a totalitarian government toward a democratic one has freed teachers and educators to build a new system of literacy that may openly acknowledge individual differences among children. Consequently, textbooks, teaching methods, and teacher education programs are at the initial stages of becoming increasingly diverse and independent of bureaucratic, centralized control.

> ...reshaping the Russian educational system...may lead to the most extensive and momentous change...

While visiting Russian colleagues in St. Petersburg and Moscow, I learned a great deal about contemporary Russian literacy education. Although my trip was profoundly revealing, its brevity allowed me to assimilate only a few vivid, memorable images of the emerging reforms reshaping the Russian educational system — reforms that, if permitted to unfold, may lead to the most extensive and momentous change in an educational system on a scale that we are ever likely to see in our lifetimes.

Russian university professors, classroom teachers, book publishers, and interpreters frequently mentioned a current shift from teaching literacy to a whole class to teaching literacy to children as individuals. Although educators in the United States take thoughts about teaching to individual needs and interests for granted, our counterparts in the former Soviet Union are just beginning to openly discuss the merits of teaching individual students. When I asked if teachers previously employed any degree of learner-centered teaching, I was told that Communism and the totalitarian political system of the former Soviet Union had promoted the overall welfare of society at the expense of the individual (S. Fyodorv, personal communication, 1992). Traver (1989) confirmed this view by stating that

> one of the important goals of the educational system is the teaching of collectivism. Students learn that a collectivist works to improve society, not to further [their] own well-being. They are taught that an individualist selfishly seeks personal benefit, not the good of the whole. Children are not praised for being different from their classmates; rather, they are told that is impolite to show off what they know. Anyone who does attempt to stand out is asked, "Are you better than the others? (p. 8).

Zuyew (personal communication, 1992), Director of Proveshcheniye Publishing House, one of the largest publishing houses in Moscow, noted that teachers under the Soviet political system tried to make their students all the same. Similarly, Monakhov (personal communication, 1992), a professor at the Scientific Research Institute of Current Educational Methods, stated that to have equal education in the former Soviet Union, teachers had to employ the same educational patterns all over the country; that is, schools used the same curricula, textbooks, problems and lessons.

This highly centralized Soviet educational system strictly regulated what teachers and students did in school (Monakhov, personal communication, 1992). Faced with this reality since the time of the Tsars (Downing, 1984; Eklof, 1986), teachers in the former Soviet Union taught their students how to survive in a society that glorified the collectivist and denounced the individual. To this end, then, teachers taught students to contribute to the good of society to the exclusion of teaching them how to develop their unique potential and excel, lest they draw unwanted attention to themselves. Consequently, in implementing government directives and policies, teachers applied their time, attention, and expertise toward ensuring that everyone in the entire class learned the same things, in the same way, at the same time (Monakhov, personal communication, 1992).

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Literacy Dialogues

Literacy — Philosophy and Methodology

What are some changes in literacy theory and pedagogy that are evolving in Russia as viewed by contemporary Russian educators? The educators with whom I met provided invaluable insights for helping me to begin to understand the dramatic changes presently developing in their educational system. When elucidating the current efforts in reading education Ramzayeva (personal communication, 1992), an author and a professor at the Russian Pedagogical Institute, explained that, "During the first three months of school, children at age six learn to write and read" concurrently. Ramzayeva, did not elaborate on learning to write, but, did say that for young children, learning to read begins by learning to name letters in the alphabet, pronounce the hard and soft sounds, express consonant plus vowels sounds, work with syllables, read words and sentences, discuss complex readings step-by-step, and practice their verbal skills. Reasons given for using this skill-based approach to reading instruction centered on the orthographic-phonemic regularity of the Russian Cyrillic alphabet and on the bureaucratic requirements of the government. Although Ramzayeva (personal communication, 1992) acknowledged that "some teachers don't feel that children need to engage in the full repertoire of instruction," she reiterated, "It is [still] compulsory." She went on to say that, basically, there is a strong emphasis on employing a bottom-up view of reading. A national color-coding standard associates soft consonants with green, hard consonants with blue, and vowels with red, somewhat like the early charts in the United States (see Weber, 1995). This color-coding guide is included in the ABC text and is posted in chart form on Russian classroom walls (Fyodory, personal communication, 1992).

To observe firsthand Russian educational theory in practice, I visited a kindergarten class of 21 children. They diagrammed words, divided words into syllables, counted the number of syllables by the number of vowels, put syllables into words, and listened to riddles. Guided by color-coded wall charts, the children also used manipulative letters during their lesson to spell out words. The teacher did not refer to a teacher's manual and was exceptionally dynamic. The children were equally enthusiastic and energetically responded to questions posed by the teacher about their learnings.

Based on school visitations and discussions with educators, I initially concluded that Russian schools generally relied on a single, unified system of teaching reading although there was some mention that other systems exist. A presentation by Svetlovskaya (personal communication, 1992), an author of several books and professor in the Russian Language and Methods of Teaching Primary School Department at Moscow State Pedagogical University, confirmed that alternative systems do indeed exist and that new ones are continually emerging. She described her "Theory of Reader's Independence" as a new multi-dimensional theory for teaching reading. According to this theory, reading is an "active process that on its own cannot be positive or negative," and a book "is an instrument that can either destroy or build." To introduce her theory, she posed the question, "How do we understand the ability to read?" She then asserted that reading ability is accompanied by the "ability to find one's self with the help of books. We cannot work otherwise." She also commented that "each child has [her/his] own level of perception." Thus, for Svetlovskaya there is only one way to help a child —" If the child can read, I can show [her/him] a wide world of books. If a child cannot communicate on [her/his] own, then the child would be in the same position as I without an interpreter." Her recommendation for helping a child who can't read is to encourage that child to "talk" to books. The child may ask rhetorically, for example, "Do I know you or not?" and "What are you going to tell me?" Svetlovskaya went on to explain how she "helps the child see the book, know the title and pictures, and look through it [before asking] the child to go and read the book." According to her, "even the [emerging reader] will try to communicate with the book on [her/his] own terms [though] it may be hard for the child to explain 'like' versus 'not like' and why [one book] is easier to read than others." The crucial task then is "helping the child to understand that if I want to read, I will." Svetlovskaya further asserted that it is critical to help the child to build self-confidence, which "begins forming reader independence." Thus, children learn to read when they decide to and not, in her view, when so-called reading skills have been mastered. The Theory of Reader's Independence predicts that by the end of second grade, children know what they like and don't like to read, and that they rely on the teacher primarily to help them understand what they read when they request assistance. She summed up her views by saying that, "Liking to read for its own sake is not the goal. Children should go beyond the sheer pleasure of reading and use it to make the world more accessible to them." Fundamentally, Svetlovskaya's particular emphasis is helping students to explore the world of reading by encouraging them to personify their books and to become independent decision-makers as they learn to read.

In discussing independent readers, Lvov (personal communication, 1992), also an author and a professor at Moscow State Pedagogical University, explained that during the intermediate grades, students are immersed in Russian literature even to the point of dramatizing it in the classroom. Students also receive lessons in fluency and in reading for "correctness and comprehension."

To see how independent readers interacted with print, I observed a third grade class. The students listened to the teacher read a fable they had previously read as homework. Afterwards, they silently reread it and enthusiastically discussed it. The students then answered questions and dramatized their reading. As in the kindergarten class, the teacher was very animated and spontaneous. Again the teacher did not refer to a teacher's manual, and she taught the class as an entire group. What was most notable about these students was their oral proficiency in discussing and dramatizing the fable. It appeared that, unlike in the United States, Russian schools placed considerable emphasis on developing oral strategies. Speaking and reading aloud eloquently was also evident in all interactions with my Russian colleagues. I observed an enviable facility for reading and speaking aloud in many of the professors, classroom teachers, publishers and interpreters, with whom I met.

Materials

The underlying theories and practices of teaching reading in Russia made me curious about the instructional materials available in the classroom. Most teachers used, what was referred to as, the ABC Books to teach neophyte readers (Fyodorv, personal communication, 1992; Lvov, personal communication, 1992). These texts were hard-covered and contained traditional readiness materials including letters, simple sentence "stories" with more difficult stories, and poems appearing near the end of the book.

Linda Pratt converses with young Russian students

Students in grades two through four used books that were graded in difficulty and contained adaptations of traditional Russian literature, fables, and poetry. Much of what appeared in these books seemed more "poetic" than the content typically found in older American basals. As Zuyew (personal communication, 1992) stated, "we have presented to children parts of excellent literature — books rich in language." Stelliferovsky (personal communication, 1992), a former scientist and college professor and currently the Chief-Editor for Proveshcheniye Publishing House, said that students in grades five through nine used anthologies which contain the works of famous Russian authors, such as the nineteenth-century poet Pushkin, as well as biographical sketches and follow-up assignments. Nonfiction dominated the reading materials provided to students in grades ten and eleven. Upper-level Russian textbooks detailed the lives of the former Soviet Union's greatest authors and poets and critiqued their major works. The actual writings of these authors and poets appeared in separate publications (Stelliferovsky, personal communication, 1992).

In general, it seemed that the basic books used for reading were graded in difficulty and contained some skills questions. Unlike traditional American basals, these books were used with an entire class of children, incorporated considerable former Soviet Union literature, and were minimally tied, if at all, to teachers' manuals.

What new materials for teaching children will appear as the Russian educational system undergoes a form of change? Some Russian educators are interested in writing and publishing new books for children. Djatshkova (personal communication, 1992), a member of the teaching staff at Moscow State Pedagogical University, shared her newly designed books to be used as toys. She invites six-and seven-year old emergent readers to play with her toy-like books. While playing with her specially designed and shaped books, children learn to handle them, read something, for example, a date and then learn to "read" a related paragraph. During this "book play," Djatshkova asserted that children's interest grows naturally and a desire to create their own toy-like books begins to emerge.

Zuev (personal communication, 1992) expressed his intention to publish more reading materials for children. However, severe, widespread economic dislocations and shortages of paper in Russia have severely hampered publishing and retailing efforts. A scarcity of newly published reading materials for parents to buy and for local authorities to purchase and distribute has made it difficult to put books in the hands of young children. Although, as Fyodorv (personal communication, 1992), a former teacher, computer analysis, and a current interpreter and entrepreneur explained, there are some textbooks for parents and authorities to buy , but the exploding cost of food, clothing, and other necessities has drastically shattered what can be spent on new books for children to read in school. Consequently, schools must rely on outdated books (i.e., those extolling the Soviet Union and Communism) because, according to Zuyew (personal communication, 1992), schools simply lack the funds to replace them.

Although there is little money for replacing old books on a large scale, books which have been recently updated and reprinted are becoming increasingly de-politicized by omitting information on "socialist devotion and [Soviet] history" (Ramzayeva, personal communication, 1992). The theme of nature, recently termed "the environment", has been gradually replacing the former political themes. Perhaps the most notable change in reprinted books has been the growing omission of Lenin's picture from the fly leaf of books (Fyodorv, 1992).

The books that I saw in classrooms and elsewhere were filled with colorfully illustrated traditional Russian folklore and literature. Such books were highly treasured, though limited in number. As

indicated in Povsic's (1981a; 1981b; 1982a; 1982b) articles, some children's books have been available for purchase from the former Soviet Union or have been translated and sold by publishers in the United States. In the past, getting books translated and exported to the United States was difficult. Today, however, with the growing number of Russians proficient in English and with the increasing trade between Russia and America, children's books written, translated, and published in Russia for export to America should be easier than in years past.

Conclusion

How does Russian literacy compare with literacy in United States? Can our two countries support one another in developing literacy? As I see it, both countries are motivated to help their children become more actively involved with the literacy process. Philosophical ideas about education generally have been open to scrutiny and revision in the United States because of the emphasis placed historically on individual rights and freedom of expression. American teachers have had considerable freedom in teaching reading. Regardless of the specific program, once behind closed doors, most teachers have relied on their professional views and experiences to decide how best to cultivate literacy. Today, many American educators are viewing literacy as learner-centered with an interesting twist; they now recognize that the classrooms in which they implement their child-centered views are communities that nurture and encourage literacy development in individual children within a social context.

Previously Russian educators had to carefully align their philosophies and practices of teaching reading within specific ideological and bureaucratic constraints. Until recently, literacy instruction in the schools had to emphasize the development of children as contributing members of a centralized socialistic system rather than as individuals with diverse talents, aspirations, and potential contributions. With the abrupt demise of Communism in the former Soviet Union, the underlying philosophy of literacy is moving toward an openly child-centered view of teaching and learning. In the midst of a political and economic revolution, Russian educators are beginning another revolution as they move away from educating the proletariat to teaching literacy to the individual student.

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At this time, American and Russian educators have a unique, perhaps even historic, opportunity to cooperatively affect how children can achieve literacy in the broadest sense. The American educational practice of helping individual children to develop as independent readers and writers and the Russian educational technique of emphasizing classroom "communities" rich in literary, oral language, and dramatic traditions seem to be complementary. By blending these two aspects of American and Russian education and adapting the amalgam to each country's particular social, cultural, and historical conditions, another revolution may emerge, one which is diverse and universal.

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Reading and Television: A Parent's Role in Molding a Child's Future

David Berg

ABSTRACT

In this paper the author discusses his own parents' role in shaping his reading habits, the way parent volunteers in his school assist their own and other children, and recent research on the effects of television on children who are left to view on their own. Suggestions are offered to actively engage children (and parents) in literacy.

Parents are their children's first teachers and the ones who instill standards and mores, who are the constant as children go from one teacher to another over the years. I am well aware of the fact that I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my own parents. The foundation for literacy was developed in a household where reading was modeled for me. Reading was considered an enjoyable activity, and time taken away from reading was treated as a great deprivation. I saw my parents read and write for all sorts of reasons: for enjoyment; for information; for social situations such as reading letters; for organizing their worlds as they referred to personal calendars or marketing lists. Their modeling set me on the right track and has stayed with me to this very day.

As the principal of the Curtis Estabrook Elementary School that the International Reading Association named as having the Exemplary Reading Program in New York State, I recognize that one of the outstanding aspects of our school's literacy program is the incredible amount of parental involvement we enjoy. Our children's parents are a very important aspect of our school and one that has made it better for all concerned.

When I became principal of the school a major goal of mine was that everyone who came through the doors of our school should feel welcome and encouraged to come in to find out more about the wonderful things that we do here. My vision has always been that our school will be viewed as a community based organization. There is evidence that the majority of our parents do feel that way about P.S. 272. This is particularly evident in the number of parents who volunteer their time in our school. As we work together it is most gratifying to me that we all have the same goal — to provide the very best education for our children that we possibly can.

How are we indebted to our parents? Well, first and foremost, we are delighted that they join with us as partners in their children's education. From the first, we had a School Decision Making Team involving parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators working and planning together. Now mandated under the New Compact for Learning, our team is called the School Compact Team. This type of confirmation — that we were doing something right before it was a mandate — is very gratifying, but reflects the spirit of our school.

Unconscionable budget cuts are devastating the New York City Schools. Once again it is our parents who have come to our rescue by volunteering to keep our library running on rolling carts, providing money for our RIF (Reading is Fundamental) program, serving as reading volunteers, providing security in the school, and conducting fund raisers for the extras that the children and teacher must always have. Simply stated, they are there when we need them.

Of course, this is a great luxury since many of our children are from single parent homes or homes where both parents are "forced" to work. Nevertheless, many of our working parents have also found the time to remain involved and to continue their roles as their children's first teachers.

Growing up, my parents did not have to tell me that reading was enjoyable — they demonstrated it for me. So often parents underestimate the tremendous influence they have as their children's first teachers since they do not appreciate that what they model is what their children learn. Indeed, the expression "Do as I do, not as I say," has a very different meaning when you realize that children are learning by example. If parents wait until children are in bed to read, they deny their children a critical learning experience.

We read even without books and children need to know this. I remember when a principal of a school took over the presidency of a local reading council and shared with me his apprehension since he did not read books. In questioning him he admitted that he was an avid reader — but of magazines. Too often, I feel we think that reading has to fit into a neat compartment. I find that I read the cereal box, instructions for things I may never make, magazines, newspapers, and so on, as much as I read books. I suspect that this is because I lead a very busy life and do not always want to get involved with the characters in a book and then pull myself away. Instead, I find all sorts of reading materials for my use. None of us should sell ourselves short as this person did. We need to appreciate that reading is a process that is applied to many different situations and materials. Transmitting how much reading is going on at home is an important understanding for youngsters.

Friends of mine asked me what they could do to help their children become lifelong readers. I told them that it has been shown that infants who are given a soft book in a crib develop more positive attitudes towards books and reading than children who were not given that experience. I remember very well the two cloth books that I had as child — both were in French, but that did not matter, for it was the experience of feeling secure with a book that was being fostered. My friends still thank me for that advice. They are parents who were concerned about developing the love of reading in their children, the pleasures they have known.

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It is much more difficult for the parent who is not a reader, someone who does not know the enjoyment of getting lost in a good book instead of TV or a movie. It is indeed a challenge for someone who wants his or her children to love reading, but who does not have the time, inclination, or desire to pick up a book. This problem is really a very simple one to solve. If the parent does not enjoy reading, then she/he should still encourage the children to read by taking trips to the public library for the purposes of taking out books and setting aside a limited time (e.g, 20-30 minutes) and place for the family to read. Making certain that a child has many books and other reading materials from which to choose is important.

If a parent is not going to read with the family, then they facilitate discussion of what was read. It is vital that children talk about what they read, even if it is to retell the story in their own words. Discussing, retelling, and explaining favorite parts of what they read are critical. Such engagement fosters children's understandings and connections with books as well as develops higher-level thinking skills. Thus the parent who did not read the book with the child can encourage comprehension, making this shared quality time where the child is the center of the parent's attention. Even if the parent is not able to speak in English, this technique is very effective because it makes reading a social activity, not a passive one.

Over twenty years ago Sesame Street was extolled as providing disadvantaged and very young learners the opportunity to acquire the skills they needed to succeed in school. It is certainly true that we owe a debt of gratitude to the Children's Television Workshop for their development of this high quality program. What resulted, unfortunately, is that TV, including Sesame Street, has become a way to keep children occupied and learning. We forgo that what is critical is the discussion and application of the learning after the viewing to cement the learning and to extend the learning from the TV set into the child's own world.

> ...TV has become a way to keep children occupied...

Today there are many educational programs that are provided for children. The most popular one now is Barney, which has included skills related to socialization and societal situations, such as multiculturalism and people with special needs. In a study coming out of Yale University, it has been shown that Barney is very successful at what it tries to teach provided that there is follow-up discussion so that the children can connect the learning into their own lives. Presently many educators are endorsing a constructivist educational theory, which simply says that you do not truly learn and understand anything unless you somehow take what you have been exposed to and then apply it to a situation so that you can construct your own meaning for the information. This is what Dewey (1938) said years ago in his theory of learning by doing and very much what Piaget (1980) told us with his schema theory.

The principle goal of education is to create people who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done. How interesting that educators keep going back to the same truths, but with new names. It was said long ago in the Chinese proverb:

I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand.

Television is a major factor in all our lives. I am troubled by children who sit in front of television sets and watch without ever discussing what they saw with their families. I, of course, am opposed to children watching so many programs with violence and super heros. Children need to be guided to interpret what they see and read and to place it into the context of their own lives. This is especially true if parents are to instill values in their children.

I also know that when I think back to books I have read, there are certain parts that are very well remembered. When I have read a book and then see a movie version of it, I am disturbed because the actors do not look like the characters I saw in my mind's eye. In reading, I created my own world through my interpretation of what the author wrote. I am certain that if I were to draw a character as I visualize him, and the author were to do the same thing, they would be very different. This personalization of the book makes it mine in a way that no other reader has. If we provide children with instant images of the books they are going to read, will they truly feel a connection to the book? I am not certain. I do know that imagination and visualization are very important in constructing one's own meaning. With the advent of television, I wonder if we are cheating our children of this skill. How then may parents use television appropriately? Fox and Fanyo (1988) offer the following suggestions for parents:

1. Establish a schedule with your children of how much television they may watch each week and which programs they will see. Stress programs of educational value as being better for them. With so many entertaining and educational programs, this is much easier today than in the past.
2. Be firm and consistent about following the joint plan of viewing. You should also set an example for your children in your own television viewing.
3. Discuss the television program with your child and help your child to extend the learning, to explain what was seen, to plan an itinerary for a newly learned country and to list the things to see there, etc.

Children, on average, begin viewing television between the ages of 3 and 5, and they view about 30-54 hours per week, nearly eight hours per day! Once they are in school, the average child views about 25 hours of television per week — far less, but what about the weekend viewing (Inguagiato, 1991). There is some evidence that the rapid-fire pace of the images and the bright colors shown on television are detrimental to young children because of sensory overload. Rapid image changes and choppiness of movement prevent reflection on part of the child, hindering the child's adaptive capacity and disturbing the balance of the child's inner life. All this results in a sense of powerlessness and loss of control (Inguagiato, 1991).

After the Los Angeles riots I remember hearing some African American men interviewed on PBS's *Charlie Rose Show*. What struck me as frightening and tragic was the discussion with a young man in his twenties who escaped his poor urban environment in the slums of New York City to become a writer and poet. He stated that most African American men do not believe that they will live very long, and, furthermore, because of the violence surrounding their daily lives they get involved with dangerous things (i.e., violence, drugs, crime); they see no long-term future for themselves and want to enjoy their short lives, as they perceive them, as much as they can. This sense of powerlessness is tragic. Their minds and lives are lost. It does not take a great leap to make the connection between the information about television viewing and this perspective on lost lives.

Youngsters who were raised on television exhibit, especially in the primary grades, a strong resistance to reading and to exerting any kind of effort. Later these children cannot cope with print. Children who are read to have power over the social situation by controlling the pacing and asking questions as needed. Later on, as readers themselves, they have a greater vocabulary and concept development, make connections between printed and spoken language, and are able to learn that they, as writers, also have power over the written word. They have connected listening, speaking, reading, writing, and applying higher-level thinking skills to all these situations as active participants, not passive viewers controlled by people outside the home or school.

Television viewing has many negatives. It is time away from family and friends. It presents many unrealistic, oversimplified and exaggerated views of life. Television welcomes short attention spans and fosters difficulties in attending to lengthier work in school. It replaces reading, reduces physical activity, and decreases children's opportunity to think creatively.

To be sure, television viewing is not all negative; it informs, entertains and educates, if used wisely (Fox & Fanyo, 1988). Studies have shown that television viewing up to two hours a day can positively influence a child's performance in school but the viewing must be in an appropriate context.

Now that I have been rather critical of television, readers might ask what this has to do with school? I think that what we do at P.S. 272 is helpful: P.S. 272 exemplifies a community of learners working and planning together to provide quality literacy education. From the moment one enters the building, one is aware of the children's enjoyment of reading. Examples include classroom doors decorated as favorite books and displays of student writing detailing their love of literature.

> ...a community of learners working and planning together to provide quality literacy education.

I begin each morning over the PA system by greeting our P.S. 272 family. That family is an extended one. Parents know, and are told by me, that by having a child in our school, they are automatically a part of our school, too. This includes parents who are not able to donate their time, just as it includes those that do.

The New Compact for Learning quotes an African proverb: "It takes a whole village to raise a child." That is, and has been, our belief at P.S. 272, and we are very lucky that we have such dedicated parents and teachers.

What Can Parents Do to Get their Children to be Literate Individuals?

Read to them often. Help children reflect, understand, acquire new vocabulary and have time to fit what they have learned into their own world. Engage children in discussions about what they have read, viewed on TV, or experienced during the day. Be sure to ask them questions that will make them think beyond the surface of those experiences. Plan family activities, such as going shopping or visiting a park, and then later discussing the experience with the child. During mealtime have older children help by reading labels and directions aloud. Discuss things with children and truly listen to what they have to say. There is no bigger turn-off than speaking to someone who you think is only half-listening to you. Model for children the types of behaviors you want them to acquire. As a change from reading, tell your child a story; this keeps alive the old tradition of fairy tales, myths and legends. Afterwards, discuss the stories, and have the child make-up stories and dictate them to you. These dictations might be turned into a book and illustrated. Have your child read and write everyday; children who read eleven or more pages a day perform better in all the writing tests than those who do not.

It is important to accept children for who they are, and do not impose your own dreams upon them. Give children space to dream, grow and succeed, even to fail. When you disapprove of a child's behaviors, use discipline but always send the message that you love the child, no matter what he or she might do. Set limits for children. Saying, "No," is reassuring to children because they know it is for their best interests, and comes from love and concern.

Encourage children to experience the world and all it has to offer. The time that parents take when their children are young will be repaid many times over when children grow into self-motivated and life-long learners.

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On the Importance of Real Reading and Writing with ESL College Students

Effie Papatzikou Cochran

ABSTRACT

Three basic pedagogical questions: What should ESL students be reading if they are to write well? What must colleges do to support ESL reading and writing? How is ESL writing best assessed? The author argues that reading features prominently in the answers to each of these questions. The use of unaltered, "authentic" literature in the English language, taken from a wide spectrum of sources and augmented by special ESL notes and exercises, is advocated. The author also maintains that the particular need international students have for acculturation courses relates most directly to their English reading capability and suggests that a "response-to-reading" format should replace the "theme" or "issue" approach that now dominates university writing assessment testing. Finally, volume or "holistic" reading is strongly recommended as a means of firmly implanting good English language reading habits.

As a young student of English as a foreign language (EFL), I had to read a great deal. Volumes of stuff, as a matter of fact, at first painfully and laboriously, then with increasing enjoyment as linguistic growth enabled my mind to subordinate language to content. As I improved, the volumes got even larger, but the "stuff" was always, from the very beginning, **real** English, not made-up "English for beginners" or "English for foreigners" but real English literature. I was nearly an adult when I started to learn the language, and if anyone had tried to teach me "Dick, Jane, and Spot" English, my adolescent soul would have rebelled, and I would have remained a monoglot Greek to this day. That this did not happen was due largely to my EFL teachers' wisdom in making me read real English from the very first year that I began to study the language.

When I came to the City University of New York to teach writing to adult English as a second language (ESL) students, given my own experiences I naturally insisted that my classes not only write but read.[1] I did my best to prepare them to meet my Department's expectations, and I dutifully selected short articles on the sorts of contemporary themes that were featured in the students' writing assessment test. But I also gave them whole books for homework, and in both categories of readings I tried never to assign texts that had been altered to make them easier for ESL students. [I did so for a variety of reasons, several of which I will explore later in answer to the question; What should ESL students be reading?] But fundamentally, I sensed early on that while I could not be sure that what excited me would always **excite** my students, I was positive that what bored me would invariably **bore** my students! Simplified, edited prose certainly bored me, so I avoided assigning it if at all possible.

In the light of this, you can imagine my bewilderment when, as I was describing to my ESL supervisor how well my students were doing with the books I had assigned them my supervisor responded, "We don't do reading in this department. This is the department of English. We only do writing." I should have asked, "Then how do the students know what good writing is?"[2]

The principle really is just as simple as that. If you want students to write English effectively, they must read authentic English. How can someone produce what they haven't been exposed to? Can an artist who has never seen an armadillo paint one? To be sure, one also needs to write in order to learn to write, just as one needs to swim in order to learn to swim. The art of writing is so much more complex, subtle, varied, transcending-principle-or-rule than the art of swimming, students need to be exposed to an enormous quantity of quality writing before and during their writing efforts.

1 As writing-reading research intensified during the 1980s, I realized that I had created for my students a "content-centered, integrated skills curriculum", in which the books being read provided "learner motivation and purposeful activities", while the reading and writing skills integration reinforced my students' learning (Grabe, 1991).

2 Literature on the need for teaching reading and writing simultaneously is legion. Carson & Leki's (1993) recent collection of articles Reading in the Composition Classroom is a veritable goldmine of research and experienced opinion on the subject. See also the individual articles by Tierney, Sotor, O'Flahavan & McGinley, 1989; Spack, 1992; Zamel, 1992; Hill & Parry, 1992. The last two sets of authors, for example, view reading and writing as "inextricable" and "inseparable" respectively. Tierney — who has written widely on the topic — cites evidence showing reading and writing to be "symbiotic": "... a kind of dialectic emerged in the context of reading and writing together, which did not occur when students only read, only wrote, only answered questions, or only participated in other introductory activities such as brainstorming. In other words, when writers engaged in reading and readers engaged in writing, a symbiotic relationship emerged between the two ways of knowing. In this symbiosis, reading and writing afforded students the opportunities to think more critically" (Tierney et al., p. 168).

All writers need reading. The importance of reading in the teaching of ESL writing[3] is straightforward. Anyone charged with implementing a reading mandate has to ask, **First** — *What* should ESL students read? If ESL curricula and textbooks are any indication, the answer to this question is not self-evident, and I would maintain that most schools and publishers have, in fact, latched onto the wrong answer. **Second**, we have to ask ourselves — Are ESL students *ready* to read? We are so obsessed with making ESL persons write, it has not occurred to us that perhaps we need to provide some other skills and kinds of support before they are capable of reading, much less writing! **Third**, how can we assess more accurately *how well* ESL students read and write? Difficulties with writing assessment tests are widespread, and the City University is not alone is wondering what to do about assessment. My intent in this essay is to examine the three questions just posed and see what answers may suggest themselves.

First of all, then, **what** should ESL students be reading? The general answer to this question is implied by the conclusion we have already reached: students need to read large quantities of "good writing" if they are to write well themselves. This clearly suggests that ESL classes need to be exposed to what we have traditionally called "literature". I am certainly not the first ESL teacher to make this statement in print, though I have been "doing it" without saying so outside my classroom for some three decades. Leonard Moody from Great Britain and John Povey from the United States were among the first generation of "literature" advocates to go to press, followed by a second, on-going generation that includes Jean McConochie, Howard Sage, Henry Widdowson, and a number of others in both England and America.[4] I want to suggest further, however, that this coupling of literature and ESL contains within itself at least three sub-texts which we need to consider with greater seriousness: (a) Literature chosen should contain the exemplary writing; (b) Literature should be read in its authentic form; (c) Literature selected must be written in many voices, beyond Eurocentric views.

> If you want students to write English effectively, they must read authentic English.

(a) "Literature" should comprise classic and contemporary examples in the English language of the **very best** writing available. I'm afraid that's not the sort of writing that fills most of our ESL textbooks, homework hand-outs, and examination sheets. We tend to choose pieces that are, we think, clear examples of certain **types** of writing (e.g., narration, exposition, argument), but in concentrating on prototypes we inadvertently admit into our anthologies writing that is downright mediocre. We need to have our students read texts that sing, whose passion and precision leap off the page and make us exclaim, "Truth and beauty live!" Instead, we have them read bland journalistic pieces and then wonder why their writing is boring. It's because their reading is boring! If that means that in addition to excerpting the best current writing we need to include the classics of English and American literature, we must not be afraid to do so no matter how daunting the vocabulary or distant the age. Because our students are speakers of other languages they already know a great deal more than most native English speakers about communication across cultural chasms and bridging an additional one doesn't scare them nearly as much as it scares us.

> Some full-length novels and biographies... just seem to open themselves to the ESL reader...

(b) The literature we have been talking about needs to be made accessible to ESL students without alteration. (To simplify it is to destroy it, since editing a masterpiece produces a new and always inferior mini-piece, not an authentic version of the original.)[5] We make literature accessible on a number of levels, most obviously in the oral tradition and analysis we relate to our students in the classroom about the texts they are reading. Some full-length novels and biographies, even though they were by no means written for the classroom, much less for non-native speakers, just seem to open

3 For the remainder of this essay, I will be referring to "ESL" students, classes, teachers, texts, and so forth, for the sake of simplicity. Let the reader be aware, however, that the case presented here applies to teachers and students of developmental skills almost as directly as it does to those whose focus is English to speakers of other languages. Finally, it should be obvious that most of this is also applicable to "straight" English, since in virtually all urban colleges and universities today such classes contain numbers of students who came "up" via an ESL/EFL or developmental skills route.

4 For surveys dealing with the pros and cons of using "literature" in the ESL classroom, see the articles by Spack (1995), McConochie (1982), and McKay (1982). McKay presents a particularly thorough yet concise treatment. Note also Spack's and McConochie's observation that "ESL students deserve to discover that 'English can be a beautiful language' (Spach, 1982, p. 705), not just a 'practical and utilitarian' one" (McConochie, 1982, p. 232).

5 To make matters worse, simplification may not even accomplish its intended goals of enhancing the text's readability and the student's reading ability. "There are ... serious disadvantages to using (the simplification) approach. As Honeyfield (pp. 434-35) points out, simplification tends to produce a homogenized product in which the information becomes diluted. The additional words in the text tend to spread the information out rather than to localize the information. Furthermore, the simplification of syntax may reduce cohesion and readability. Since proficient readers rely heavily on localized information and cohesive devices, deleting these elements will contribute little to the development of reading skills." (McKay, 1982, p. 531).

themselves to the ESL reader, perhaps because they sing a familiar "song upon an alien soil". I am thinking, for example, of the *Diary of Anne Frank* (Goodrich & Hackett, 1956), Nahid Rachlin's (1978) *Foreigner*, Russell Baker's (1982) *Growing Up*, and Amy Tan's (1989) *The Joy Luck Club*, or for somewhat more advanced students — Eva Hoffman's (1989) *Lost in Translation* and Richard Rodriguez's (1982) *Hunger of Memory*. But there is another important way of making literature accessible that must not be neglected: A good ESL text can be an enormous asset to the teacher, yet until recently very few quality literary anthologies were available. Fortunately, more literature collections suitable for ESL students are now published (McCloskey & Stack, 1992; McConochie, 1995; Parry,1992; Sage, 1993; Valeri-Gold & Demin, 1994). A good introduction and explanatory footnotes, coupled with carefully designed vocabulary exercises that distinguish between the useful and the overly specialized or idiosyncratic or archaic, can open up complex texts to the novice reader.[6] Such devices can enable ESL students to make contact with a piece of writing so difficult that teacher presentation alone would not suffice, but so magnificent that it can make them, as Frank Smith (1978) says, "members of the club" of those who love to read this language. Unfortunately, much of what ESL students encounter in textbooks is truly simplistic and therefore destined to repel rather than to attract.

(c) Last of our literary sub-texts, ESL readers need to include, of course, the best of American, English, and British Commonwealth writing. But that is just the beginning. World literature as well, both English originals and good translations, along with third world and minority literature,[7] should take their place alongside classic and "mainline" English language texts in ESL readers. From one perspective, such inclusivity is important because without it we miss most of the rich, stimulating, and profound literary compositions in the world. After all, most people are not speakers of English, and many wonderful pieces come from outside the English world. Translating is as much a literary art as authoring, and when speakers of a text's original language happen to be present in a classroom, the teacher has a golden opportunity to allow those students to demonstrate their native language expertise.

Another critical reason for teaching world and third world literature in our ESL classes is that this is where our students come from. In my urban university, for example, when you number the African, Latin, and Native Americans, and add in those who were born and raised in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, eastern Europe, and the Caribbean, you have counted the vast majority of the student body. Other universities, at least urban ones, have similar populations, and since we read in large part to find out who we are, it is really quite unthinkable not to represent among our ESL readings the literatures from which our own students have sprung. To insist that we do so is constructive pluralism, and no mere beating of a political drum.

What must colleges do to support ESL reading and writing? A year ago, I was invited by my University's Office of Community Relations to participate in a roundtable discussion of "Our students in the year 2000". Being a Greek native myself, I was asked to be part of the western European panel. The most interesting issue to me about the discussion that ensued was its consistent call, from every university constituency there represented, for more study skills and acculturation courses and for counseling — academic, social, and personal.

One can understand right away the special need that international students have for study skills courses and academic counseling. Primary and secondary school systems in most other countries differ, often radically, in the way they approach learning. Outside the United States enormous emphasis is placed on simple memorization of a series of relatively brief passages. The student is seldom asked to discuss, develop, or defend his/her own opinion of a thesis or text; the teacher's word is absolute and never to be challenged; the answers to most test questions have been given almost verbatim at some point during the course so that the student need only be dutiful in memorization and skillful at surmising which already-copied-down answers are likely to appear on the exam.

The call for acculturation courses[8] and for personal and social counseling, however, points to another dimension of ESL students' academic lives, one that rather unexpectedly relates to their reading and writing. Obviously, students from other cultures need time and opportunity, not only to learn a new language, but to understand and feel at home in the broader culture. This includes unstated cultural knowledge and habits about visiting friends, gift giving and receiving, table manners, dress, the speed and quality of friendship, interaction between the sexes, and the myriads of other subtle values and relationships that make human life often puzzling but almost always bearable and sometimes delightful.

These exquisite human values and relationships directly affect students' ability to read. Writing is dependent upon reading. But reading is itself dependent upon the ability to take pleasure in the subject matter and its mode of expression. Someone who is lost in a

6 Explanatory footnotes, clearly and concisely composed, can overcome even McKay's (1982) caution about linguistically or culturally difficult texts. If a piece of literature is accessible to the moderately well-educated native speaker, it can be presented in such a way as to be accessible to the ESL student as well.

As for vocabulary exercises, in addition to helping the student steer between the Scylla and Charybdis of technical and archaic words used by an author, they strengthen vocabulary development, which is itself a "critical component of reading comprehension" (Grabe, 1991, p. 392).

These two elements, explanatory footnotes and vocabulary exercises, should be the principal distinguishing features of a good ESL reader, in contrast to the general purpose literary anthology. The line is a fine one, however, and many anthologies lend themselves to both ESL and general composition course use.

7 On the latter, see Greene's (1995) essay.

8 By the term "acculturation" I intend courses designed to introduce foreign students to the cultural milieu of their host country. Such offerings should be distinguished from both academic skills courses and counseling, which attempt to acquaint students with the distinctive features of college study, and personal counseling, which addresses a student's individual problems and needs.

linguistic and cultural wilderness knows no such pleasure. When we love to read in a language, it is because we are able to surmount our basic grammar and vocabulary struggles and come to terms with life in the society of which that language is an expression.

This doesn't mean we necessarily have to love every aspect of our lives in a particular community. Quite to the contrary, unhappiness with the *status quo* often appears to nurture writers. But it does mean we have to become accustomed to our surroundings. Non-native speakers, who do not feel good about themselves and are not at home in their immediate community and with their academic endeavors, can neither receive (read) nor produce (write). The bottom line is, if we're not basically familiar with a language **and its culture**, we can't lose ourselves in reading that language, and if we can't lose ourselves in reading that language, we can't write in that language. In short, reading makes writing possible. There are other kinds of support that academic institutions have to provide in order to make reading possible. Acculturation courses and counseling, along with the various modes of academic support, are absolutely essential adjuncts to an ESL curriculum, not optional tangential elements.

Third, and last of our questions, focuses on the matter of evaluating ESL students' reading and writing: How is ESL writing best assessed? Some non-ESL teachers believe they have students in their classes who shouldn't have passed the university's English language "gatekeeper" exams but did, and a number of ESL teachers feel they have students who deserve to pass and have not. So widespread, in fact, is dissatisfaction with writing assessment tests in particular that more and more colleges and universities are turning to portfolio assesssment (i.e., viewing a representative selection of the student's overall work) as a more accurate means of assessing writing ability. I think a great deal of the difficulty with writing assessment tests stems directly from the **reading** problems we have been discussing.

The writing models to which most of our students have been exposed for all or part of their English language studies are either made-up or edited for foreigners. The edited pieces are often technically obscure, fragmentary, and are almost always poorly written; they are usually clipped from newspapers, magazines, and academic journals (the last being the source of the worst writing of all).[9] The made-up pieces are always, without a single exception, poorly written. Is it any wonder, then, that the writing assessment compositions our students turn in are untrue-to-life, obscure, fragmentary, and poorly written?

Writing assessment tests are obsessed with "themes". (Abortion should be recriminalized/Colleges should reinstitute dress codes/Parents sometimes need to spank their children/Capital punishment is a social necessity/Sex and violence on television corrupt the youth — Do you agree or disagree? Explain and illustrate your answer from observation, experience, or your own reading.) The problem here is two-fold. In the first place, the intent of a composition theme is to stimulate the writer into writing well, but the themes often fall outside foreign students' arena of interest and experience. (To many non-natives, abortion, dress codes, and spanking are taken for granted, while television sex and violence are a recent innovation formerly accessible only to the wealthy, the novelty of which far outweighs any ability to scandalize. These themes are therefore non-issues for most ESL students.) As a result, they spend the majority of the test period trying to relate to the theme mentally and have insufficient time left to compose an interesting response.

There is a second, more serious problem with "themes". Even when the theme coincides with an issue of interest to the ESL student, the fact is that the presentation of a theme alone does not inspire a good written response. Only two things stimulate good writing: life and good reading. Since designers of academic examinations have so far been unable to encapsulate the former into a 50-word-or-less test question, the only viable alternative is to provide writing assessment test-takers with a piece of good reading to get them going. After they have read a page or two of absolutely breath-taking prose, the test directions should say: "You don't have to analyze this passage if you don't want to, though you may choose to do so if you wish, but how do you feel having read it?"[10]

This is precisely the response-to-reading approach that we in academic skills departments already follow in requiring students to keep double-entry notebooks and dialogue journals. Frankly, if we can't locate a new page or two of absolutely breath-taking prose twice a year, we shouldn't be drafting writing assessment tests. If we're worried that some of the students may have seen the passage before because it's a "classic", our priorities are misplaced. The point is to inspire good writing, by whatever means, and the truth is that good reading generates good writing. Trying to inspire good writing by presenting test-takers with a "theme" is like trying to teach writing by recipe and rule alone (e.g., topic sentence first, never write in the first person, put examples in the past tense). Rules are helpful but almost never inspiring, and sometimes they are just plain irrelevant. Good reading, on the other hand, is always inspiring and, though occasionally infuriating, is never irrelevant.

Finally, volume reading (i.e., reading in substantial, massive quantity) is a solution to writing assessment test deficiences (Martino & Block, 1992). This particular solution must be put into effect at least one year before the student is scheduled to take his/her first writing assessment. Forget about everything that was said in the opening of this essay about good literature. (I don't mean forget about it absolutely, just forget about it in those periods in the semester when you are using this particular pedagogical technique!) I am now talking about assigning whole books, **in addition to** the brilliant three to thirty page essays, stories, and poems that you analyze in detail in class. For the books, almost any pulp best-seller will do, assuming that it has reasonably varied vocabulary and as long as the plot is irresistible. *The Firm* (Grisham, 1991), *The Hunt for Red October* (Clancy,1984) , and even *Iacocca* (Iacocca & Novak, 1984)

9 For a delightful analysis of the defects of academic writing and their causes, see Limerick (1993).

10 Literary analysis and response-to-reading are fundamentally different exercises in content and in the skills they measure. Literary analysis elicits the quality of a student's reading, while response-to-reading elicits the quality of a student's writing. As Newman's (1994) observes, "A comentario de texto is not a stimulus to provoke writing; it is an expression of a student's reading"(p. 6).

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...Under the influence of exciting reading... [ESL] students... start to understand and intuit from context...

will work. In fact, pulp best-sellers are preferable for inculcating this particular virtue, since the intent of the technique is to turn the student into a craven, sleepless addict, and more difficult texts, no matter how good they are, sometimes put the reader to sleep.

What happens under the influence of exciting reading is that students stop looking up new words and phrases because they can't bear to interrupt the story-line. They start to understand and intuit from context, just the way native speakers do, and above all they love every minute of the process. They acquire, in other words, a **reading habit** in their new language, without which, as Krashen puts it, "children simply do not have a chance", and with which "people acquiring a second language have the best chance for success" (p. 84). What is more, when they come to take their exam, they suddenly discover that they can write well and at length, without remembering a single rule of composition, simply because of what they have absorbed unwittingly while they were lost in the plot of the latest popular novel. "Well-read people", as Krashen observes, "write well because they have **subconsciously** acquired good writing style [emphasis mine]" (p. 84).

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"Discuss, Talk Amongst Yourselves": Lessons from the Delaney Sisters[1]

Rose Reissman

ABSTRACT

This article presents a practical strategy for using quotations from literature to encourage the verbal and written responses of urban middle schoolers. A rationale for conversation groups is presented. Examples of students' responses as well as the real world connections are included.

One of my favorite bits on the long running *Saturday Night Live* Television Show is the segment where talk show hostess Linda Richmond provides her audience with a topic and the admonition — "Discuss, talk amongst yourselves." As a middle school language schools arts specialist, I have used a similar motivating strategy to actively engage my inner city multiethnic seventh graders in discussing various texts.

Recently a friend presented me with *The Delaney Sisters' Book of Everyday Wisdom.* As I literally gobbled up this very accessible collection of short reflections on life by centennial sisters, Sarah and Bessie Delaney, I thought ,his short volume of wisdom gleaned from the lives of these African American sisters, who had each been professional women in 1920's, held a treasure-trove of diversity insights for my students.[1]

I began jotting down memorable quotes from these women whose lives had been so richly and wisely experienced. When I read through my five handwritten pages of quotes, I was impressed by the breadth of diversity themes and issues covered in the slim volume. Among the diversity topics *The Delaney Sisters' Book of Everyday Wisdom* were: racism, sexism, self-concept, respect for others, values, character development, ageism, stereotypes, empathy, teen age mothers, and gender roles. Although the sisters expressed themselves in short "morsels" of wisdom, many of their ideas "springboarded" my own thinking on the topics. Since we did not have time for another reading during the marking period, I wondered how could I introduce my adolescents students to these intelligent centenarians within a short period of time. As I reviewed the quotes, I realized that these immediately accessible, readable remarks were perfect to engage my students in diversity discussion.

I began by introducing my students to the remarkable sisters whose comments on life and living they would be reading. These African American sisters, Sarah and A. Elizabeth Delaney, respectively 105 and 103 years old (in 1994) were the children of a slave who eventually became the first elected African American Bishop of the Episcopal Church in America. They paid their own way to earn advanced degrees from Columbia University. Sadie was pioneer teacher of nutrition, while Bessie was a dentist. They lived in Harlem during the 1920 and 1930's, the time of the Harlem Renaissance. Currently they reside in Mount Vernon where they tend their garden, do yoga each morning and eat carefully. In 1993, a reporter name Amy Hill Hearth wrote a story about them for The *New York Times.* A first book *Having Our Say. The Delaney Sisters First 100 Years* (1993) was written with the assistance of the reporter and became a best seller with the centenarian sisters appearing on national television.

Then the students were given copies of the quotes from the *Delaney Sisters' Book of Everyday Wisdom.* Along with the quote, a "Discuss, Talk Amongst Yourselves" Worksheet (See Figure 1) was distributed. The students were divided into several "conversation groups" of three to four students, read through the quote sheets on their own, and were invited to "discuss" their reaction to the Delaney Sisters' wisdom using the categories on the worksheet. One self-selected member of each conversation group acted as a recorder.

At first some of the students balked at reading "old lady quotes;" I asked that they give these women a chance to "have their say" and then react. I noticed the students quietly reading the quotes. Several looked bored, but a few began smiling. Although I had not said anything about taking individual notes, I noticed a few of the students circling, starring, and underlining comments on the sheets. In about ten minutes, the groups began quietly chatting. I was rather pleased. To be honest, I worried that this senior everyday-wisdom project might flop. Perhaps the groups would have nothing they cared to talk about or write about. I tensely anticipated the real possibility that student discussions would fizzle.

But to my delight, Sadie's and Bessie's words seemed to reach out to these inner city twelve and thirteen years old. Although the students didn't necessarily agree with many of their ideas, their comments were evidently "getting a rise" from the conversation groups. The individual record rs were busily occupied and even asking some group participants to slow down and repeat themselves. When it was time for the groups to share their reactions, my urban seventh graders, the majority of whom are African American and Latino, said much about the ways in which they were touched by the writings of these two centenarian sisters.

When asked which comments of Sadie and Bessie made sense to them and were true of their own life or what they observed in others, the students identified several. I have included some of the Delaney quotes and selected student responses.

Several of the Delaney quotes drew substantive responses from my students. At times they strongly disagreed with the sisters,

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"You can't change the past"

"My father has spent his own life trying to do this. He knows he can't but he tries anyway."

"My great aunt says this too. She lives in Puerto Rico."

"I already know this..."

"Create joy in your life. We all have to do it for ourselves."

"My mom loves to just go out when the sun shines and give thanks."

"My grandma grows flowers in a small window box. The truth is when the buds come up, they create joy for her. You should see how she lights up. No one else gets excited but she does."

"I agree with this quote, but I need to learn how to do this. Do the Delaney Sisters tell how to create joy anywhere in the whole book in the first book they wrote?"

"How we put up with racism and sexism to get our advanced college degrees. How could we stand it? ... What choice does anyone have?"

"My dad is always looked down on by Puerto Ricans because he comes from Cuba. But he doesn't make much of it. He would agree that life isn't easy. You have to put up with a lot."

"As a black female teen, I have to put up with all kinds of prejudice about my race, sex and age. But I am who I am; I don't want to do a Michael Jackson to change my skin, so I have no choice. When I'm older at least I won't have to put up with the 'you're not an adult stuff'."

"Self-respect readily means... knowing that you are a person of value... I think enough of myself to believe I can make a contribution to society."

"That sort of thing is said at church. I had a teacher in fifth grade who talked about making a contribution to society. I want to do good for my own family and for blacks as a whole."

"I am going to be a Congressman and get more benefits for abused children. I agree with this quote. I respect myself and my future."

"The most important thing is to teach our child compassion. A complete human being is one who can put himself in another's shoes."

"One of my dad's old grade school friends is homeless. He lost his job, his wife and kids, and has been on drugs. My dad says it could have happened to him too. It didn't but I understand that my dad or me could be out on the street someday. I don't make fun of homeless people. I try to give them some money or a donut if I can."

"If you are not educated, if you can't write clearly, speak articulately, think logically you have lost control of your own life."

"It's not lack of education which makes you lose control of your life, it's drugs money, and crime. You can have an education but if you're on drugs or alcohol or live with someone who is, you aren't in control of your life. If someone beats up on your regular [sic], he controls your life."

"Money is the root of every mess you can think of... Anyone who lives for money is surely missing the best things in life."

"These ladies earned plenty of money from their best seller and their work. So they can afford to say that money is the root of every mess. They have money so they don't have to worry about it."

"Color shouldn't matter... we don't see folks as black or white. This race mess is just plain foolishness. And the fighting that goes on between religions is crazy, too... The world is full of nice folks... your job is to find them."

"What planet do Bessie and Sadie come from? Do they mean the *nice* drug dealers and hit guys in Isham Park? Maybe these old ladies can find nice folks in Mount Vernon, but what about the real world?"

"Every child needs a papa when he's growing up."

"That's all well and good. But my dad moved away before I was born. My mom and her dad raised me. I don't need a papa."

"If your dad beats you or drinks, you are better off without him."

whereas at times they concurred. I was very impressed with my preadolescents provocative insights.

Finally the conversational groups focused on other activities, projects, or reach-out writings they could develop from these quotes. Amongst their class generated suggestions were:

- Share the quotes with my grandma (grandfather) and see how she/he reacts.
- Use the same topics (money, education, life, racism) and do an everyday, wisdom book using "real people".
- Write to the Delaney Sisters in Mount Vernon and share our notes.
- Read both of their books and see what else the ladies had to say.
- Why not get a "Dear Sadie/Dear Bessie" column going? Write in problems and get the Delaney sisters to answer them?
- Use the Delaney sisters quotes we disagree with to write our own counter quotes.

> ...Several Delaney quotes drew substantive responses from my students.

Several students in the conversation groups gave very specific personal connections and ideas. Their personalized responses suggest a perceived parallel or affinity between the sisters' quotes and their own lives.

- My grandma goes to a readers' [sic] circle. I once went with her when they did *Little Women*. I bet they'd love to discuss this book. They're all ladies in their seventies and eighties compared to the Delaney sisters. Not only do a lot of them talk like the sisters but if the sisters are still around and writing at over a hundred they could be too!!

  I'm in our school's community service corps. I know the seniors at the Home for the Aged would love going through the quotes like we did here. Maybe some of them could make up their own publication of Everyday Wisdom.

Figure 1: Conversational Worksheet

Discuss Talk Amongst Yourselves

Conversants:
Name _____
Name _____
Name _____
Topic: Sarah and Bessie Delaney's quotes from *The Delaney Sisters' Book of Everyday Wisdom.*
Which of the comments/quotes of Sarah and Bessie make sense to you and are true of your own life or the lives of people you know?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Why/How?

II. Which of the comments/quotes makes you want to talk back to the sisters? Which comments/quotes contradict your own or your family's views of life?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Why/How?

III. What's next? Would you want to read the whole book or any other book by Sarah and Bessie? Yes? ___ No? ___ Why? ____

Beyond talking in our class, could you think of any way you could personally use the quotes or Sarah and Bessie ideas in your writing, interviewing or community activities? If so, how? If no, why not?

> ...engage students in conversation about the authentic social concerns and ideas.

- I'm one of four sisters. Maybe all of us could do a piece about growing up like the Delaney sisters.
- Why don't we invite some seniors we know to our class? Have them sit on a panel and ask them about racism, women, education, money and life? Then we could actually have a conversation with real seniors.

Several of the groups indicated an interest in learning about the past. Among the suggestions offered were finding out about Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s. Another group was very curious about what it was like to be an African American dentist in the 1930s.

The "Discuss Talk Amongst Yourselves" project evolved from discussion groups to student centered/generated writing and oral history. The community service, senior center panel did come to fruition. Family writings and letter writing were frequently done. In all these activities my students were seamlessly involved in exploring issues of ageism, character development, money, gender roles, racism as well as other concepts.

The pace and demands of the middle school language arts do not often engage students in conversation about the authentic social concerns and ideas. The issues and concepts raised in conversation are important in developing oral language skills as well as nurturing lifelong discussion of readings. It is through the mechanism of targeting student discussions on easily accessible text selections, such as quotes or short excerpts; that middle school students can begin the pleasurable and provoking practice of lifelong literature conversations. So encourage students to "Discuss talk amongst yourselves."

1. *Editor's note: This article was submitted prior to Bessie Delaney's death on September 25, 1995.*

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Wise Woman Visits The Place Where Words Begin To Live On Their Own

She stands in black
reading poems
she wrote by the light of the moon.
Her voice makes softness
a new metaphor
singing loss, singing loss.
Silver hair rippling shadows,
onyx in gold at her neck,
movement beyond motions' reach,
strong fingers on white page.
Where se sit we find ourselves
changing the world of our tongues.
She chambers place; our own
dreams rise.
Like a toad
she offers jewels as eyes.

Kathryn Howd Machan

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Reader Response: Toward an Evolving Model for Teaching Literature in the Elementary Grades

Robert W. Blake

ABSTRACT

We are moving from a "traditional" method toward a "reader response" approach to teaching elementary school children to read and respond to worthwhile literature within the context of a learning community. After describing the present state of teaching literature in the elementary grades, one first grade teacher and her small group of children's interactions with a delightful picture book are chronicled. Elements of an evolving reader response approach conclude this article.

We are living through a disturbingly unsettled but wonderfully challenging time for teaching literature in the elementary grades. Moving from an era when children learned to find a single, "correct" meaning in a text by a step-by-step, systematic method, we have entered another period in which children are learning to read literature in a radically different way: that is, by creating, rather than finding, their own personal meanings within a learning community.

That a worthwhile literary text compels the reader, watcher, or listener to experience a story both emotionally and intellectually is, as I view it, one of the principal features of reader response. When a person approaches a literary text in the traditional manner examining it logically and rationally as a linguistic puzzle to be solved, she assumes the perspective of the scientist, acting as a detached observer. On the other hand, when an individual allows herself to apprehend a text with all her senses, she invariably becomes involved in the story and is able to see how it is related to real life. The *feeling* and *memory* responses, key aspects of reader response, are the most powerful techniques for compelling children to see literature as an extension of reality, not as a perfunctory, frequently meaningless school exercise.

> ...Children are learning to read... by creating ...their own meanings...

Signs are many that such a sea of change is occurring. Here are a few examples. Some teachers have moved from "process writing" in their classrooms to "process" literature instruction (David, Doney, Kreider & Titus, 1990). Elementary school teachers report that they are employing successfully response and dialogue response journals (Hancock, 1992). The use of "real" books for literature-based reading instruction results in "... stunning levels of success with all types of students and particularly with disabled and uninterested readers" (Tunnell & Jacobs, 1989, 470). Furthermore, teachers who employ literature based reading instruction in their classrooms find their students perform better on standardized texts than do students who use traditional approaches to reading literature (Multis, Campbell & Farstrup, 1992).

Although some elementary school teachers are using literature in their classrooms, their chief aim, though, appears to be improving reading comprehension, rather than having children respond to literature. In reaction to this trend, some educators argue that literature study itself is a worthwhile activity. Purves (1993), for instance, proposed that ". . .we think of the place of literature in a literature program. A literature program should not be a reading program with tradebooks, which is currently the case in many elementary schools . . . . It should have the elements of a Literature program" (p.356).

Walmsley (1993) observed that the elementary language arts programs have been dominated by reading instruction, usually delivered through a commercial reading system. The literature children previously encountered was made up of excerpts, frequently revised from the original texts to make the language simpler to read and the subject matter less controversial. When Walmsley interviewed in depth a sizeable number of teachers, remedial and special education specialists, school librarians, and administrators, he discovered that teachers found it difficult to articulate any purposes for literature other than it was "fun" or "it's for teaching reading skills;" he discovered " . . .little evidence of a coherent, articulated district philosophy, with respect to literature's role in the language arts program, across grades or across different levels of reading and writing ability" (Walmsley, 1993, p. 510). The teachers, he reports, had virtually no idea of the "big picture" of literature instruction; how reading and literature are related, the role of writing in reading literature, or a systematic set of methods for teaching literature. At the same time, teachers revealed they had little formal training in literature study, especially when compared to their extensive backgrounds in reading. In sum, Walmsley (1993) concluded from the teachers' remarks that there was an absence of a philosophical underpinning for literature instruction.

More recently, Langer (1994) presented the results of a study of how children and teachers understand literature by a reader response orientation and related what strategies teachers actually used in their classrooms. Langer, like Walmsley, found elementary school teachers were unclear about how to teach literature by traditional

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> methods but were also unable to articulate what reader response literature instruction meant to them.
>
> However, the field [literature instruction in elementary grades] has not provided adequate guidelines or strategies to allow teachers to build "new bones"—internalized routines and options to take the place of plot summaries and leading questions guiding students toward predetermined interpretations—new bones that can guide their moment-to-moment decision making as they plan for and interact with their students (Langer, 1994, p.204).

How Reader Response Works in a First Grade Classroom: Practice Exemplifying Theory

To demonstrate reader response theory in actual use with a small group of first grade girls and a boy, let's observe how Mrs. Kelly's children read, discussed, and wrote about a delightful picture book. From an examination of the children's and teacher's activities, I identify what I believe are essential elements of reader response and show the differences between traditional and reader response instruction. As a result, we can infer general guidelines and classroom strategies for classroom instruction.

In April, Mrs. Kelly invites four of her independent readers to take part in an informal experiment with beginning reader response. The activities will be new for both the children and their teacher. They start by reading the picture book, *Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear* (Carlstrom, 1989). The books recounts one day in the life of a preschooler, Jesse Bear. Jesse starts off his morning in a conventional fashion by "wearing" clothes, but soon — in an amazing, metaphoric leap — he sees himself as "wearing" flowers, sun, sand, carrots and peas, celery, an apple, juice, and later, when he takes his nighttime bath, bathtub water. As he snuggles into his bed with a teddy bear tucked under his cheek and the moonlight streaming through an open window, he sleepily catalogues what he will end his day by "wearing": "Sleep in my eyes/ And stars in the skies/ Moon on my bed/ And dreams in my head/ That's what I'll wear tonight" (Carlstrom, 1989, n.p.).

A joyous, reassuring picture book of a day in the life of a happy, secure little boy — in the guise of a small bear. The dedication of the book, "To Jesse David, the real Jesse Bear, with love — N.W.C." makes clear that the tale of Jesse Bear is the story of the author's own little boy.

The bright, detailed watercolor illustrations show a happy family of a baby bear, mama bear, and a papa bear, living in a idyllic cottage with a picket fence and a flower-covered arbor, with Jesse Bear taking baths in a claw footed tub and ending his day contentedly in a little boy's enchanting bedroom. The text rhymes. The characters are appealing and familiar. Although the life of the bear appears idealistic, a way of life possibly foreign to many children today, it may serve to portray not what life actually is but the way it might be.

For their first reading of the book, Mrs. Kelly has the children sit on the floor together in a circle. Each child reads their own copy of the book to silently. Then they all read the book together out loud. Although such a first reading in unison is not easy, Mrs. Kelly makes the experience pleasurable. The children and teacher obviously enjoy themselves.

After the initial, silent reading and second reading aloud, the children now talk in the whole group about their introductory impressions of the book.

Krysten: The whole book rhymes and I think it is neat.

Jolene: I like Jesse because he was a bear and because my sister's name is Jesse.

Lindsay: I read the book before and after and I think it is funny.

Bryan: (In a low voice. He seems intimidated by these articulate girls.)
I think the book is good.

Now Mrs. Kelly asks for volunteers to re-tell the story. " I will," says Jolene as she raises her hand.

"Okay. Go ahead," prompts Mrs. Kelly.

"Jesse Bear had dirt on his shirt and ants in his pants."

"Would you like Jesse as a friend?" Asks Mrs. Kelly.

"I would love that."

"Why?"

"Because he looks so cuddly and cute."

Bryan pipes up, "I would like him for a friend because Jesse has neat toys."

"I'm almost like Jesse Bear," adds Krysten. "I get up, get dressed, play outside, have lunch, play some more, have dinner, take a bath, put on my pj's, and then go to bed."

All the children agree they are somewhat like Jesse Bear. Krysten even goes so far as to identify with him, seeing no difference between a little girl and a bear cub.

For the next step in the reader response process, the children are asked to go back to their seats and write a response to the book. They are also encouraged to illustrate their responses. What follows are the teacher's directions, descriptions of the children's drawings, and a verbatim account of what they wrote.

Krysten: (Krysten draws a picture of Jesse Bear in his red shirt and his jockey shorts with blue stars.)

I't all rime's. And i't says in the morning at nigte in the after noon. And Jesse Bear rime's with is clothes like with noon at nigte in the morning. And I like this story very much I injoy this book.

Lindsay: (At the top of her paper, she draws and colors a picture of Jesse's dirty shirt and a picture of Jesse with his red shirt and his blue pants.)

The book was good. Because Jesse Bear was very funny. He said I'll wear my blue pens and my red shirt. Then at noon he said I'll wear my blue pj's. At night I wear white pj's with peanda [panda] bears on it.

Bryan: (Bryan's picture shows a brown Jesse, looking somewhat like a happy seal, reclining in an immense

expanse of blue water in an old fashioned, claw footed bathtub.)

I like Jesse Bear because I like the part when he's in the tub and it tells all of the time in a day and it is a good book and there is very good carters [characters].

Jolene: (Jolene's illustrations in purple, green, and red include Jesse at the breakfast table, Jesse reading, and Jesse in bed.)

The book has bears in it. It had singing in it. There was a mama bear a papa bear in it and a little bear. Jesse was dreminge. Jesse was taking a bath. He had a pipe to blow bubbles with in the bathtub. He had sors [stars] on in the morning. He had a tesrt [tee shirt] on in the morning.

Elements of Reader Response in a First Grade Classroom

From the previous account of reader response with an actual group of first grade children, we can infer the elements of reader response.

First, since Mrs. Kelly herself is taking a risk with introducing reader response to a group of primary school children, she meets initially with a group of four of her independent readers. Acting as an intact discussion group, they talk informally about whether or not they like to read, what their favorite books are, and what literature is to them. Then children silently read their own copy of the book. After they have finished, teacher and students read the book out loud in unison.

Now Mrs. Kelly asks the children to talk about their personal impressions of the book. Inspired by the friendly atmosphere established, the children are at no loss to respond about what the story means to them.

It's important to note that as the children offer their initial, intuitive responses to the story, rather than answering questions from the teacher about specific details, they naturally choose the details meaningful to them and necessary for their personal interpretations. Jesse Bear, for instance, has "dirt on his shirt," "ants in his pants," he wears "blue pj's," and he has "Stars in the morning on his jockey shorts." In effect, the children use "close reading" skills to substantiate their conceptions of the meaning of the story, rather than the teacher's conceptions.

What does the term "close reading" mean? The phrase is associated with the new criticism's approach to the interpretation of literature and has become a central feature of contemporary literary analysis. With close reading, one moves systematically — line-by-line, section-by-section and often word-by-word — through a text in order to arrive at its inherent meaning. This inductive method of reading a text (i.e., building up a body of evidence leading to an interpretation) is a crucial feature of this time-honored practice. With the traditional method, one uses close reading *first* to *find* the correct meaning. With reader response, one *first* intuitively — without a systematic, inductive approach — perceives what the overall meaning of a text is essentially to oneself and then uses close reading techniques to *create* a personal interpretation, which is satisfactory to the reader.

After they have read a book silently, read it chorally, and talked uninhibitedly about what it means to them, the children are invited to create a written response to their reading. Of course, since they are first graders, they also are comfortable with illustrating their reactions.

With great zest, the children express their feelings — in this case, good feelings — about what they've read. "I like the story very much." "I injoy this book." "This book was good." Relating feelings as an initial response to what they have read is a primary element of reader response. As the children create their own meanings for the story, pointing out specific words, lines, and features they like to support their created meaning, they are also fearlessly giving opinions of the value of the book, stating simply but forcefully why they enjoyed it. From my experience, I have found that as children are constantly exposed to traditional methods of reading literature, particularly with finding the "correct" meaning of literary texts, they become less and less courageous at interpreting and inevitably become dependent upon what the teacher judges the meanings of texts to be. In this case, however, the children relate what the book means to them, evaluate its worth, and without trepidation, give reasons for their evaluations. "It all rhymes." "It deals with morning, afternoon, and night." "Jesse Bear was funny." "The book had bears." "It had singing in it."

Not only do the children demonstrate they are able to read and respond orally to a worthwhile text in a quite sophisticated fashion, but through their written responses, they also show enormous strides in a command of written English. As a direct result of writing their responses, they discover much about the complex business of transforming sounds into written symbols, while at the same time creating a whole piece of meaningful discourse in response to a valuable book. Surely such opportunities are more substantive than writing out short answers to questions on worksheets or in workbooks. The written response to literature is another essential element of reader response. To learn what children have discovered, let's analyze their responses.

Krysten nonchalantly takes enormous risks with spelling in order to say what she wants to about the book. She hasn't mastered the spelling of such historically irregular words like "rhyme" and "night," but since she needs these words to say what she wishes — and is not shy about spelling them "correctly" — she writes them out the way she hears them. Notice she has seen the word "night" with a "g" in it but hasn't quite mastered our present day illogical but conventional spelling of it: "nigte." She spells another historically irregular word "clothes" conventionally but writes "enjoy" just the way she hears it, "injoy," showing some really clever hypothesizing about relations of sounds to their written counterparts. Finally, she hasn't worked out the conventional use of apostrophes yet, spelling "it" as "I't."

Lindsay already has a firm command of written English and is so mature she has even found it necessary to write out what characters say without having full command of the conventions of quotation marks. Notice how Lindsay uses direct quotations. "He said I'll wear my blue pens and my red shirt." To connect her life with Jesse's, she offers the information that at night she wears "white pj's," and with a fearless flourish informs us that her "pj's" have "peanda bears

on it." Not only is she unconcerned about the correct spelling of "panda," she is also unaware that since the noun "pj" is plural, then the pronoun "it" should be plural "them" to agree with its antecedent, something she would likely attend to with a revision.

Bryan is competent with written English, retelling the plot of the story and ending his response with a reason for finding the story valuable, because it has "very good carters [characters]." He gives his reason for liking the book and tries hard to use written symbols to represent book-like words he has heard, in this case, probably the teacher's talking about "characters" in stories.

Jolene is virtually stricken with happiness from her experience with the book and is bursting with a desire to share with others all her reasons why. She tells why she likes it, using the words she finds significant: dreminge [dreaming], sors [stars], and tesrt [tee shirt].

In summary, the evident elements of reader response are these:

1. **Children experience worthwhile literature in a number of ways.** They read books by themselves, they read books chorally, and they have books read to them. As they perceive literary texts in several different ways, they feel comfortable with entering into them, with first experiencing them emotionally, rather than using literary texts as a means for testing reading skills.

2. **After having "experienced" a literary text, children make an initial, intuitive response to a work.** One's first, uninhibited response invariably remains, even after extended discussion, the right one for that person.

3. **Children commonly retell a story to fix the sequence of events in their minds, to come to an understanding of plot (i.e., what happens in a story).** Although some teachers insist that children go beyond the simple recounting of plot, an ordering of the events of a story is not always a simple task. Even though the sequence of events in books for children usually occurs in simple chronological order, the plot lines in complex stories may be quite puzzling, especially with stories within stories and with flashbacks interrupting the forward movement of the narrative. Even with reader response, then, children need to understand the idea of narrative events and make explicit their comprehension of how plot contributes to overall meaning of a story.

4. **Children use close reading techniques to find specific details on their own, to support their initial responses.** Rather than filling in blanks in texts and in workbook sheets with single words or phrases, they identify concrete details with special meaning for them, choosing examples without teacher direction, thus creating their personal meaning for a literary text.

5. **Children allow feelings to arise and make use of personal memories triggered by the piece to assist them in relating the text to their lives.** Building upon one's feelings to understand a text is the activity I call the *feeling response.* Using memories and associations for connecting with a text I call *memory response.* Bleich (1975) terms these tasks, respectively, as the "Affective" and "Associative" responses.

6. **Children, at almost all ages, are able to write out responses to literary texts if they are allowed to find their own voices.** They need to be nudged, coaxed, and prompted constantly to create their own responses, without worrying about what the teacher "wants" or what she may think the "correct" meaning should be. Children need to be constantly assured that it's all right to write freely, not threatened with such surface concerns as correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or standard usage *at this initial stage.* More importantly, though, they need to relinquish an uneasiness about what others may think about their uncensored, spontaneous reactions.

7. **Children are able to create their own interpretations of literary texts, if we who read their written responses have assumed the stance of reader-response teacher and are perceptive enough to translate what they write into our "grown up" terms, like "theme," for instance.**

We need to explore further how children arrive at a theme for a piece of literature. Articulating "theme," which signifies overall understanding, is another essential element of reader response. There is a commonly held belief that young children are unable to articulate themes in literary texts (Applebee, 1978). One of Applebee's major conclusions to his ground- breaking study is that children cannot generalize about "theme" — following Piaget's stages of intellectual development — until they reach adolescence. First, I believe there's a problem with using Piaget's model of intellectual development as the basis for deciding young children are unable to arrive at literary theme. Piaget's model of intelligence is not that of a scheme developed by someone grounded in literature. Piaget's model of intellectual development has been criticized because it is restricted to only one kind of thinking, that of a laboratory scientist. "Piaget tells us little about creativity at the forefront of the sciences, let alone about the originality that is most prized in the arts or in other realms of human creativity" (Gardner, 1983, 21). Piaget's model is not, therefore, wholly satisfactory for assessing children's ability to identify or state themes in literature.

Another problem I find with Applebee's conclusions is the method by which the adolescents he studied addressed literary themes. Applebee reports adolescents analyzing stories in terms of their mechanics, the logic of their structure, and by their images and symbols; in other words, adolescents study stories in a fairly formal fashion and only then do they explain their reasoning. The approach thus used reflects the new critical model, one that is logical, systematic, and "scientific." What adolescents "do" most likely reflects instruction and formulaic approaches to writing assignments. We can only wonder at how children might have responded differently to stories if they had had extensive reader response practice.

After listening to a series of three realistic fiction and three folktale books, kindergarten, second-grade and fourth-grade children were able to identify books with similar themes and were able to state

in their own words what these themes were to them (Lehr, 1988). The children expressed their own ideas about the meanings of stories, and even though their general statements could not be judged as adult, their themes were appropriate to the texts. "Kindergarten children most often gave responses that differed from adult choices but were congruent with the text, suggesting that the child's perspective of meaning differs from that of an adult (Lehr, 1988, p. 337).

Real children reading and talking about what an authentic book means to them had no trouble revealing what the book's essential meaning was, its "theme," if you will. At the same time, they revealed a refined knowledge of the elements of narration even if they couldn't express this knowledge in adult terms.

8. If we accept the assumption that learning is social (Halliday, 1978) **and that experiencing literature is a social act** (Applebee, 1978; Berscheid, 1985; Gardner, 1983), **then children discussing what they read with others in small groups and in the class as a whole, especially with the teacher as a member of the group, is an indispensable element of the reader response approach to literature, what I term a "learning community."** [See Peck (1987) for a discussion on the elements of "community" and how it is created and maintained with adult groups]. The atmosphere of a learning community ensures that each child will have an immediate and sympathetic audience for their oral and written response to literature. This feedback, by other children and by the teacher, validates the child's response and at the same time enriches the responses of all other children. As the learning community is developed and nurtured over time, it increases trust and good feelings among the children, contributes to their socialization, and allows them to join the wider cultural community.

Figure 1 summarizes the elements of reader response by contrasting them with the salient features of traditional literature teaching.

Even though there appears to be little agreement regarding teaching literature in the elementary schools, including a philosophical base,

Figure 1: Reader Response: Toward an Evolving Model for Teaching Literature in the Elementary Grades

TRADITIONAL	READER RESPONSE
1. The teacher emphasizes the text primarily.	1. Although a worthwhile text is a necessary element, the primary emphasis is on the child's oral or written response to that text.
2. The teacher guides the child to find the "correct" meaning within the text.	2. The child creates her own personal meaning for the text, with the sophisticated help of an especially trained and sympathetic teacher.
3. The teacher directs the child to answer specific comprehensive questions about the elements of a literary text, such as setting, plot, characters, and theme.	3. The child gives an initial response to a literary piece and then uses her knowledge about literary elements to support her interpretation.
4. The traditional method is essentially objective, detached, inductive, and "scientific." Emotions and personal opinions are not emphasized.	4. Feelings, memories, associations, and intuition (perceptions arrived at without rational thought) are not only allowed but form the core of reader response.
5. The child typically shares her responses with the teacher only.	5. The child shares her responses with other children in small groups and with the whole learning community. Each child thus sees individual response grow, becoming enriched and validated by the responses from her peers and teacher.

...there are signs we are moving toward a new model for literature teaching.

guidelines, and strategies for classroom instruction, there are signs we are moving toward a new model for literature teaching. It is difficult, especially given the present unsettled state, to predict the exact shape this new way of teaching literature will assume. Whatever the final form assumes, the evolving model will be the result of attention to questions like these:

1. What happens as a child actually reads literature? How do children perceive stories, poems, and plays through reader response?

2. Why is group discussion of responses to literature, both oral and written, essential to the reader response?

3. Does an understanding of literature call upon intellectual processing abilities different from those traditionally taught as components of reading?

4. And finally, why indeed engage children in reading and responding to literature? Of what inherent value is literary knowing? Is it, as many contend, a "frill"? Is it useful merely as a tool for teaching children how to read? Is its primary purpose to give pleasure? Is it to promote practice in critical thinking or are there more fundamental reasons why one should acquire literary knowing? Does literary knowledge lead to a profound understanding of one's self (Gardner, 1983)? Does a background of the important books from one's culture lead to cultural appreciation (Purves, 1993)? Is literature the repository of all the social and personal laws of a people, the guides to how one functions in a society and how one behaves in one's family life (Havelock, 1963)? Wrestling with these and similar questions will help us address the most basic of all questions related to literature: of what value is its study to the children of a society?

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Three Children, Three Stories of School and Literacy: Ira, Ani, and Caitlin[1]

Anne McGill-Franzen, Cynthia Lanford, Barbara Gioia and Marla Blustein

ABSTRACT

In a longitudinal study just nearing completion, several colleagues at the National Research Center for Literature Teaching and Learning (CLTL) have been documenting the classroom experiences of a small number of case study children from preschool through grade 2. The children we studied are thought to be at-risk: a deaf child of hearing parents, children of immigrant families struggling to learn their way in a strange culture and language, and minority children whose families are economically disadvantaged. Indeed, even as second graders, several of the case study children have not learned to read. Yet we have found a great deal of diversity in the support offered to children by families and schools. In these brief portraits of four children, we relate their classroom experiences to the children's development of literacy and literary understandings.

The analytical framework for interpreting our observations draws upon the work of Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991), who found that classrooms offering high instructional support in literacy to low-income children could compensate for an impoverished home environment. By the same token, heroic efforts on the part of parents in the Snow et al. study could not help children maintain even an average level of achievement when the children experienced two years in a row of mediocre literacy instruction in the classroom. Our longitudinal study is also influenced by sociolinguists, such as Green, Kantor, and Rogers (1991) and Florio-Ruane (1991), who hold that children's day-by-day experiences within particular classroom communities shape their cumulative understandings of the uses, purposes, and possibilities of written language. Likewise, year after year in the same school, teachers and children relate to each other in particular ways and construct institutional contexts for understanding development.

We have followed the children for four years as they made the transition from grade to grade, and sometimes from school to school. We spent, on average, a day each month, observing them in class, talking with them about their reading and writing, collecting samples of their school work, and documenting their development as literate individuals. We talked with teachers and parents about the ways children experienced literature in their everyday school and home lives. As teachers and researchers, we wanted to explore how children experience literature, particularly in school, and what these experiences mean to individual children as learners.

To show their developing literacies, we have selected particular artifacts — photographs and journal entries, for example — collected over four years from the children's lives at home and school. We believe these exemplars represent critical pieces of each child's literary history. Likewise, we bring to the foreground of our discussion certain dimensions of the children's classroom experiences that show the impact of schooling on development.

In this spirit, we briefly introduce four of the children we have studied: Caitlin, Ani and Ira.

Caitlin is African-American and academically successful. She attended a preschool for low-income families that was extremely impoverished in terms of access to books. Since then, her mother, a working class, single parent employed full-time, has sacrificed to send Caitlin to a parochial school. Caitlin's mother chose this school because she believed it would provide more opportunity than the urban public school Caitlin would otherwise attend. The parochial school's emphasis on "the basics" helped to allay the concerns of Caitlin's mother and, in some ways, contributed to Caitlin's academic success. CLTL researcher Cynthia Lanford describes the explicit instruction of the parochial school as very traditional and "bare bones" but a good match for the print knowledge Caitlin needed to learn to read.

Ira, also African-American, was not so fortunate. Ira attended a racially, economically, and educationally isolated urban public school just a few blocks from her home. It is the public school that Caitlin's mother did not allow Caitlin to attend. Ira's great-great grandmother read to her and taught her to write her name. Anne McGill-Franzen observed Ira for four years. No print knowledge was developed in preschool. In the years that followed, the school offered literature and books but little explicit instruction in learning to read and write. Whole class choral reading dominated the classroom, and by the end of second grader, Ira felt neither like a reader nor a writer.

By contrast, Ani's school has supported and extended her development as a reader and writer. A profoundly deaf child, Ani is an avid reader and an accomplished writer. Ani entered our study as a four-year-old in a suburban preschool for deaf and hearing impaired children. Barbara Gioia, a school psychologist and CLTL researcher met Ani when she first enrolled in preschool. Barbara attributes Ani's success to her intense engagement with the language of storybooks with her family and teachers.

In the case studies that follow, we describe characteristics of the school experiences of Caitlin, and Ira and how these contributed to the children's literate development.

Ani and Ira: Contrasting Histories

In a world without sound, children who are deaf learn to read and write only with great difficulty. For thousands of years, deaf children were considered "dumb" because they could not hear or speak. Even today, deaf 18 year-olds typically do not read beyond a third or fourth grade level. Contrary to all our expectations, Ani was the first child in our study to learn to read and write.

At the beginning of kindergarten, Ani, like many 5-year-olds, was drawing pictures and captioning them with random letters or grown-up "scribble script." These captions represented ideas — ideas that, in this case, were explained by Ani in American Sign Language, using the syntax of that language ("The tree big," for example, in Figure1). By the end of first grade, Ani was spontaneously, and in English syntax, writing what she called "fiction" — high-jinks narratives about a dog named Lincoln (See Figure 1). She was reading (silently and with sign) between a fourth (reading comprehension) and sixth-grade level (vocabulary) as measured by standardized tests; and her spelling was conventional. By the end of second grade, her mother reported that Ani was not only reading written language with sign, but she had chosen to read a favorite childhood story about Hebrew traditions, "Hanna the Joyful," out loud, to her family, with her voice. Ani's accomplishments are awesome. To say that school accomplished these extraordinary achievements is to understate the support of her family. To say that school and family together, acting with shared purpose and great resources, brought these achievements about is to underestimate the role that Ani herself, with her "extraordinary passion for books," played in her own development. Nonetheless, if the support of either home or school had been lacking, we doubt that the outcome for Ani would be so fortuitous. By the end of first grade, Ani had attained a level of written language proficiency that most deaf adults never achieve in a lifetime.

Ira was not so lucky. Of all the children in the longitudinal study, Ira was the most engaged in story-worlds. Ira loved listening to storybooks and always worked a strong female heroine (See Figure 2,

Figure 2: Strong females are central to Ira's writing.

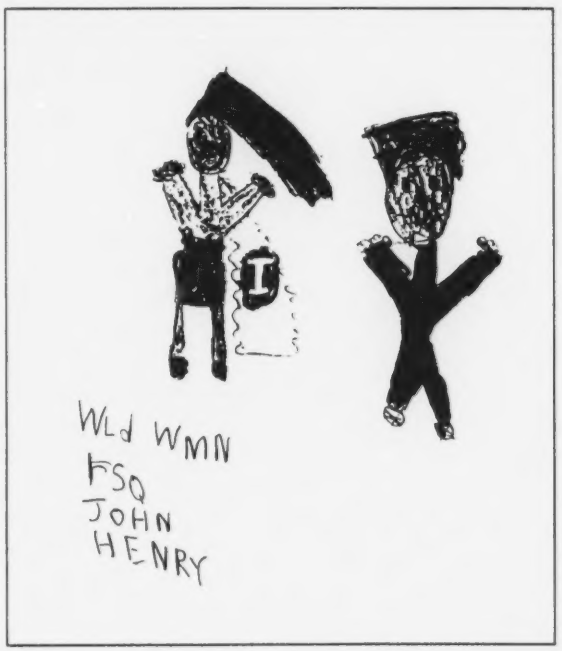
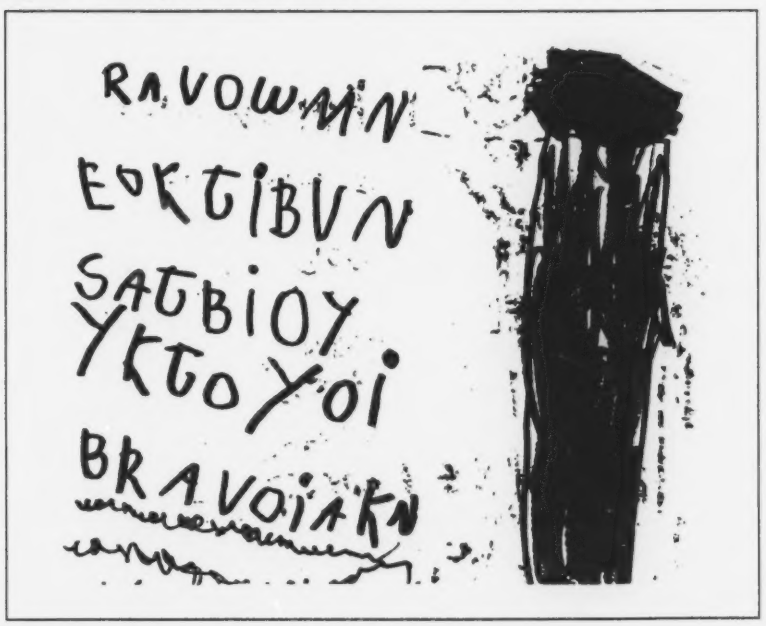


Figure 1: Ani's fiction reflects ASL.



"Wonder woman rescues John Henry," written mid-first grade), or a magic cape or glass slippers, into her oral narratives and picture captions. We were surprised to learn from her mother that Ira, at five years old, owned not a single book nor had ever been to the public library.

Ira's great-grandmother, an African-American woman for whom she was named, but who had limited contact with Ira, told us that she "didn't know what was wrong with that mother." Great-grandmother Ira graduated from a woman's college in the Northeast, at the age of almost 50, after she had migrated North from the Carolinas, raised five children, and worked for thirty years as a nurse's assistant. One of great-grandmother Ira's children, now a federal judge, insisted that great-grandmother Ira give herself the educational opportunity that she had worked a lifetime to provide for her children.

Education was a legacy deeply rooted in the values of Ira's family. Ira's great-great grandfather was a schoolteacher in coastal Carolina where it was rumored that his children (including great-grand-

mother Ira) were "so smart because he kept them locked in a houseful of books." Ira's great-great grandmother was a diarist who regularly sent notebooks filled with her poetry and advice to each one of her children. Ira's great-grandmother shared several of these notebooks with me. I selected an excerpt that has a particularly bitter meaning in light of the school's lack of knowledge about Ira:

Now you just take notice anything a pale child does. It's great. A pale child needs be encouraged. Never make one feel backwards about its efforts. Good or bad.... Speak of yours...a dead silence. Speak of something at your church or school and their eyes seem to blur.

The school was completely unaware of Ira's family literacy. In fact, they pitied Ira as a child "who had nothing." Ira's mother never finished high-school and was herself a victim of the violence and chaos in the community where she lived with her three children. In spite of the lack of books in the mother's home and the poverty apparent in Ira's immediate family, we expected that Ira would find safe haven in the school and support for her literary muse. We expected Ira to be successful.

Unlike Ani, who attended a wealthy suburban school with a reputation for progressive curricula, Ira attended an urban school in an impoverished community. Ira's school was in the third year of declining reading test scores and was under state mandate to show improvement or risk losing its state registration.

After two years in school, at the end of kindergarten, Ira was still anxious to read and write; she invented spellings to caption her story drawings and she included Cinderella in almost all of them. Her achievement in reading on standardized tests was reported in the average range in kindergarten. By the end of second grade it had fallen to the 12th percentile. Ira no longer read ("I hate books!") nor would she even complete the classroom writing assignments ("Why should I? No one looks at these things anyway."). A poor school was more devastating an educational handicap for Ira than not hearing language at all was for Ani.

Snow et al.'s conclusions that children cannot maintain average progress without the school's help were supported by our observations of Ira's schooling and the consequences for her development as a reader and writer. Likewise, with the resources of her school behind her, Ani accomplished what we had only dared to hope for her, beyond our expectations.

Are there lessons that we as teachers and researchers might take from the classroom experiences of these children? Teachers of both Ani and Ira were using literature in their classrooms; Ira's teachers used a literature-based reading series in addition to trade books. There were literally hundreds of books for Ira and Ani to read. Teachers in both schools borrowed books from public libraries as well as the school's libraries to create themed units for reading and writing. What qualitative differences did we find in the literacy interactions in Ira's classroom and that of Ani?

We found a complex interplay of teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and the resources available to them.

We found a complex interplay of teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and the resources available to them. There were significant differences in the ways Ira and Ani spent their reading and language arts time (See Table 1).

Table 1: Qualitative Differences in Literacy Time, K and Grade 1: Ani and Ira

Discussion of stories
32 more minutes of discussion in Ani's class (46 v. 14)

Choral reading
No choral reading in Ani's class
20 minutes in Ira's

Assisted reading
20 minutes more assisted reading in Ani's class (33 v.13)

Teacher explanations/questions
22 minutes more in Ani's class (28 v.6)

Composing
8 minutes more composing in Ira's class (38 v. 30)

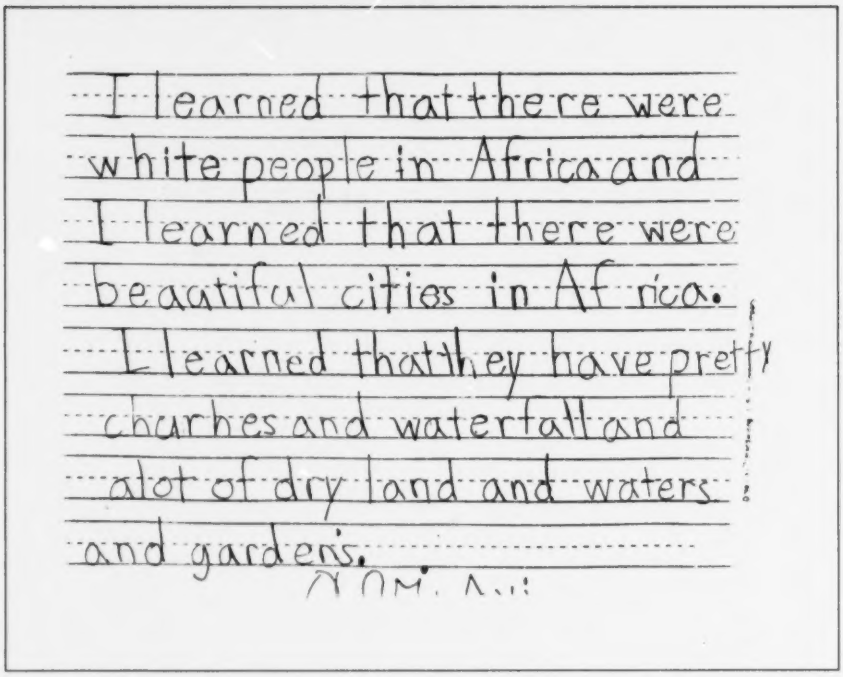
Coloring
(20), workbook (6), off-task behavior(22) in Ira's class
None in Ani's class

Different instruction: Different learning

Ira learned how to read new stories and new words by reading chorally with the rest of the class. Her teachers tried to monitor reading development by requiring children to point to each word with their fingers as they read. Teachers walked from child to child, helping them to keep up. Ira's teachers had no support from other teachers in their classrooms.

By contrast, Ani had a sign language interpreter at her side for all her academic work, and at least one teaching assistant in both the mainstreamed "regular" class and in the special education classroom. Both her "regular" teachers and her special education teachers taught collaboratively with other teachers in an inclusive classroom setting with cohesive curricula connections. Ani, for example, studied Africa in first grade; she read books and maps on Africa, talked about Africa with her teachers and peers, and wrote what she had learned (Figure 3). Over our four years of observations, Africa was never mentioned to Ira, an African-American child.

Figure 3: Ani has extensive knowledge of Africa.


I learned that there were
white people in Africa and
I learned that there were
beautiful cities in Africa.
I learned that they have pretty
churches and waterfall and
alot of dry land and waters
and gardens.

There was no whole group choral reading in Ani's class. Instead, children read self-selected or teacher-selected theme books in small groups, or created their own books to read and to give to others to read. Whenever Ani needed assistance, there was an adult to help support her learning. Ani spent a great deal more time than Ira discussing the literature she experienced in school.

Most of the children in Ani's class could read; most of the children in Ira's could not. Ironically, the organization of Ani's class created more opportunities for teachers to assist students in reading and writing, and more opportunities for children to help each other, whereas there were few opportunities for individual or small group interactions in Ira's class, and peer support for each other was limited by their lack of skills. Reading teacher support in Ira's school was out-of-class, and although support was targeted to all the students, group sizes were large and the curricula was not related to classroom literature or writing. In Ani's school, the teachers of the deaf and other specialist teachers followed the curricula of the mainstream classes, using perhaps different books, but developing the same concepts and vocabulary.

Teachers and teaching assistants collected portfolios of children's work in Ani's classroom, and together, Ani and her teachers selected and discussed the "best examples" of her reading, writing, and spelling work. By keeping close track of Ani's development, her teachers were able to provide her with intensive and explicit instruction in vocabulary, spelling, syntax, speech articulation, and any other area where Ani might be experiencing difficulty.

In Ira's classroom, the only evaluations of Ira and her peers' development were the standardized test results, which teachers were under great pressure to improve. Year after year, Ira's teachers saw only declining scores in spite of their best efforts, and in the absence of any developmental benchmarks to challenge those tests, they came to expect that the children they were teaching would make little progress.

Changing Ira's History

We asked ourselves what might we do differently to improve the chances of Ira and other children who attend low-achieving schools. We believe that we must build on teachers' and children's strengths, that is, the literature curricula that is in place. Until Ira and her teachers became overwhelmed by the cumulative effects of poverty, low achievement, and lack of resources, they saw literature as engagement, as a way to make connections with each other and to other parts of the school curricula. We need to put teachers back in touch with children's development through small group interactions, curriculum-based assessment and teacher research. Whole class interactions limit teachers' knowledge of children as individuals and beliefs about what they can accomplish as learners.

Although the need in most urban schools far outweighs the available resources, schools do not tap into the goodwill and energy of their communities and families nearly enough. With curricula knowledge, parents can advocate forcefully for their children and community volunteers can themselves become a literarcy intervention in the early grades. People, like Ira's great-grandmother, can help children make connections between literature and life and can contribute greatly to a literate community and what that might mean to African American children and their sense of heritage.

Detailed knowledge of the development of individual children and the literacy curricula that they experience over several years of schooling present a powerful opportunity for us as teachers to reflect on our practices and perhaps challenge our beliefs about what schools can accomplish. Sacks (1989) spoke of the tragedy of being cut off from full use of language. He said that

> [I]t is one of the most desperate of calamities, for it is only through language that we enter fully into our human estate and culture, communicate freely with our fellows acquire and share information. If we cannot do this, we will be bizarrely disable and cut off — whatever our desires, or endeavors, or native capacities. And indeed, we may be so little able to realize our intellectual capacities as to appear mentally defective (p.8).

Although Sacks was speaking of children who are born deaf, the sentiment applies as well to children who are born poor and who attend a poor school. For Ira and Ani, the educational handicap was greater for the poor child than the deaf child.

A Mother's Sacrifice: Caitlin's Success

Caitlin's story is one of academic success. At the end of grade 2 she is a proficient reader and writer. Caitlin is able to read books above the fourth grade level and she writes with fluency and conventional spelling. She scored above average in national percentiles for all areas of language arts in the standardized tests she took at the end of grade 2 with her highest scores in vocabulary (90th percentile) and word analysis (86th percentile).

Caitlin attended a parochial school from kindergarten through grade 2, a school where most of the students were Caucasian and from working class backgrounds. Caitlin is African American.

Credit for Caitlin's success is in large part due to her mother, who not only has high expectations for Caitlin, expecting her to become a lawyer or judge, or perhaps a pediatrician, but also has taken her to the library, bought her books, read to her, monitored her completion of reading assignments and worksheets (either provided by the school or purchased by her), and made a personal financial sacrifice to send Caitlin to parochial school for the "important first years." Caitlin's mother is a single parent who works full-time in an office job.

Credit for Caitlin's success also belongs in part to the instruction she received at her parochial school. Although resources were limited and class sizes large, the teaching provided Caitlin with the print knowledge she needed to develop as a reader and writer.

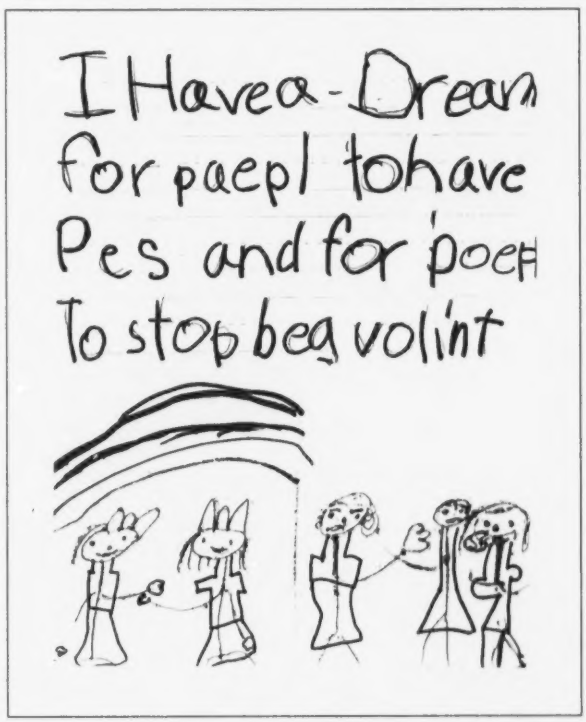
When Caitlin entered kindergarten, her story and book concepts were well-developed. Caitlin could pretend read familiar storybooks with book language and intonation, and she could tell an imaginative story that included characters, action and dialogue. What did not develop over the course of her preschool years were concepts of print or understanding of the alphabetic principle; these are not surprising given the print impoverished environment of the preschool, the limited access to books and writing materials, and the lack of explicit instruction. At the beginning of kindergarten, Caitlin did not know that print is the message-carrier in books, and she was still experimenting with different ways to represent her own texts, variously using drawing, scribble-writing, and letter strings.

Instruction during Caitlin's 3 years in parochial school has been traditional and skills-based. Using an 1989 edition of a basal program, reading and writing instruction began with letter identification, letter names, letter sounds, sight words, and then sentences using a combination of sight words and rebuses. Much of the focus was on students' completion of multiple choice or short answer questions in workbook pages and worksheets. However, despite about 90 minutes of language arts instruction each day from kindergarten through grade 2, Caitlin spent remarkably little time reading in school. There was little focus on stories or the reading of trade books. Teachers typically read aloud from tradebooks selected by students for 10-20 minutes each day, but there was rarely time for any discussion. By grade 2, most of the reading from the textbook was assigned as independent work to be completed at home.

By contrast, everyday Caitlin's teachers set time aside for journal writing, and her journal entries over three years provide a record of her development as a writer. In kindergarten, the teacher seemed unsure of the value of this activity, and though its significance was primarily in providing interesting reading for the children years later. Invented spelling was encouraged and the teacher stressed the importance of sounding out words when trying to write them. She sometimes provided a sentence starter; she often helped students as they wrote. As Caitlin observed, "I know how to sound out words!" and she did. Caitlin's journal entries in kindergarten were short: developing from isolated words in the beginning of the year to one simple sentence by the end (See Figure 4). Caitlin had learned that print is the message-carrier in books. Her sense of story structure and language was evident when she created her own oral texts. Caitlin was puzzled, however, by a request at the end of the year to "write a story." She responded that she could "write words" and asked if a "story" was "like a sentence?" She then wrote her story which was a version of a simple sentence she copied from the board for independent work some 2 months earlier.

As in the previous year, Caitlin spent about 30 minutes each day writing in her journal, and in first grade, children often had the opportunity to share their writing with peers. Caitlin was encouraged to use invented spelling and students chose their own topics (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Caitlin's writing carries a strong messasge.



Her first grade entries were considerably longer and she wrote in several genres: chronologies that referred to personal experiences and imaginative pieces where animals talk or monsters walk.

Caitlin's second grade class was unusually large — and the teacher soon gave up trying to have students share their texts. There was no audience for writing. Nonetheless, Caitlin's journal for grade 2 contains approximately 70 entries and it provides some interesting information about her development of written genres in a classroom generally dominated by worksheets, skills and fill-in-the blanks.

The same genres appear throughout the year, probably as a function of the teacher-given topics ("My Favorite Sport," "My Weekend," and "My Dream"). All entries are topic centered, and the linkages between clauses were never random, but relational or chronological. In a few of her chronologies, Caitlin's "voice" is evident:

> last night it was fun I went roller sackating at school when it was not over with mom said it is time to go and I didn't want to go when we got hom I was mad said to muyself I will never speak to my mother a gin but a the morinning [I] loved her again. (October, Grade 2)

The most obvious change in Caitlin's writing from the beginning to the end of her second grade year was that the percentage of words spelled correctly increased, even though adult standards of correctness were not an issue for journal writing. Caitlin's writing showed that she had internalized some of the writing conventions of capitalization and end-mark punctuation.

When asked to "write a story" at the end of second grade, Caitlin enthusiastically produced an imaginative narrative with dialogue, in the manner of the "Goosebumps" series that she said she so enjoyed hearing the teacher read, but it ended up as realistic fiction when the "ghosts" were explained away.

Caitlin's academic experiences were successful. There is little doubt that the hundreds of hours of direct instruction contributed to Caitlin's becoming a proficient reader and writer, in so far as proficiency is measured by tests. Caitlin did well on end-of-year standardized tests because, as her teachers noted, those tests test "what we teach."

Yet, despite being a proficient reader, easily able to read and understand chapter books of some complexity, Caitlin did not choose to do so. There was little opportunity to read in the classroom, and she did not choose to read them at home, preferring instead to reread the short, illustrated books that had been read to her since preschool (e.g., *Corduroy, Cinderella)* and rhyming, repetitive, and cumulative stories. But when given opportunity and an audience, Caitlin enthusiastically read, discussed and wrote complex texts. Her evident enjoyment of literary talk allowed us to know something of Caitlin's literacy capabilities that was unseen by her 2nd grade teacher, who using standardized tests and skills exercises as her measures, could only say of Caitlin, that she was "about a B student."

Conclusion

For all the children we studied, it seems apparent that it is not enough to simply look at the literature components of an instructional program, or the time engaged in literacy activities, to assess the impact of instruction on a child's acquisition of language and literacy skills. We need to also take into account the beliefs and assumptions that accompany the implementation of a program, the quality of the activities, and the opportunities that children have to construct personal meaning as a result of those activities. There is no question in our minds that children are differentially advantaged/disadvantaged by their schooling and family experiences.

> ...Children are differentially advantaged/ disadvantaged by their schooling and family experiences.

Caitlin's print-impoverished preschool environment.

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the New York State Reading Association, Kiamesha Lake, November, 1995 and reported in the National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning Newsletter, December, 1995.

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Cynthia Lanford, Barbara Giora, and Marla Blustein are doctoral students in the Department of Reading and associated with CLTL.

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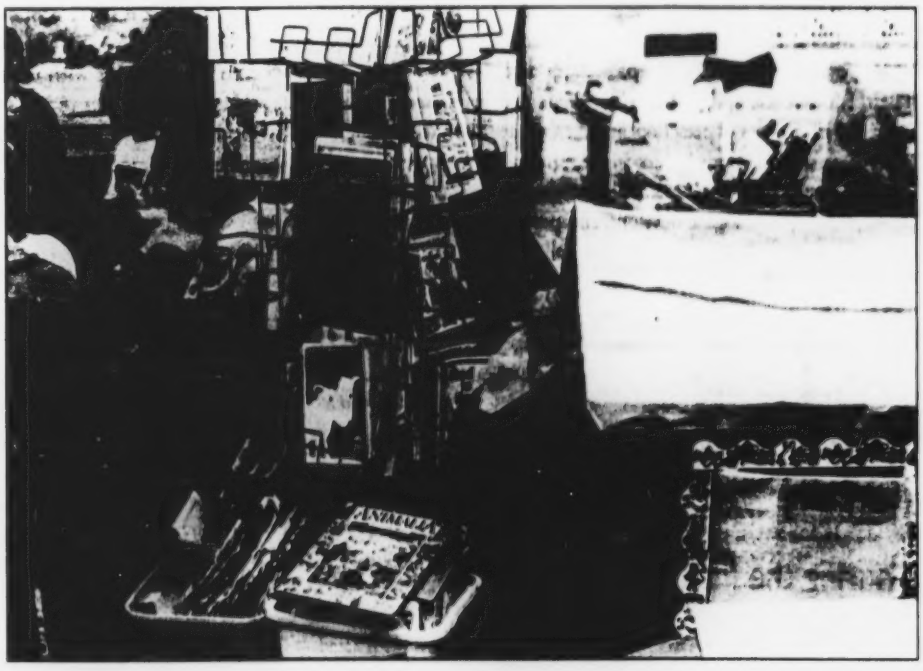

Ani's print-rich environment, grades 1-2.

Parental Beliefs in Promoting Emergent Literacy for Children with and without Disabilities

Leslie K. Goldenberg

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to present findings revealed as part of a larger study examining the literacy beliefs and practices of parents who have children ages three to five with and without disabilities. The Questionnaire of Literacy Beliefs and Practice at Home consisting of 13 belief statements and 24 practice statements was distributed to parents who have children enrolled in preschool programs in the Capital District in Upstate New York. Overall, responses of over 47% of the parents revealed a common set of literacy beliefs among them regardless of having children with or without disabilities. Another common finding revealed that many of the parents have incomplete information related to literacy beliefs, and parent education programs may benefit from incorporating the information obtained from the survey.

Young children with developmental disabilities and those deemed at-risk for developing disabilities have become an established part of the pre-school and daycare community. Their educational and therapeutic needs are being met through inclusion in all types of preschool and daycare settings. These children often have delays or disorders in the areas of receptive language development, expressive language development, pragmatic language development, phonological development, problem solving, or the overall ability to process information. All of these skill areas are required for the successful development of reading (Adams, 1995). These developmental learning disabilities can affect the prerequisite skills needed at the formal educational level as well as the child's development of emerging literacy skills (Kirk, 1987).

> ...learning literacy is a continuous process beginning during the first few months of life...

Research has recognized that learning literacy is a continuous process beginning during the first few months of life when babies are exposed to toys with printed letters and when parents start to share picture books with their young children (Strickland & Morrow, 1989; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Literacy development involves the social and cognitive processes that begin at birth and continues with consistent exposure to print materials and interactions with children and adults who are reading and using print (Cook, Tessier & Klein, 1992). Numerous studies have revealed that there are specific components and early experiences that are prerequisites to the formal reading instruction at the early elementary school level (Anderson, Herbert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985; Isabell & Holmes, 1989; Sampson, 1986; & Sanacore, 1990). These early experiences include being read to aloud, exposure to environmental print such as signs and labels, opportunities to use writing implements, consistent verbal exchanges with adults related to the child's daily experiences, seeing adults reading at home, and the sharing of household written materials such as the mail or shopping lists. These literacy activities reflect the recognized importance of early experiences in laying the groundwork for later formal reading instruction in the classroom (VanKleeck, 1990).

There is a definitive relationship between what children are exposed to at an early age and their level of reading ability during their later years (McCormick, Kerr, Mason & Grundel, 1992; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Taylor and Strickland (1986) found that families who shared books with their children and expanded on the stories in meaningful ways provided an environment conducive to emerging literacy. The one constant factor in all of these studies is the strong influence of the child's early environment on further reading development.

While research has demonstrated that exposure to early literacy experiences predisposes children to develop strong reading skills, many parents do not recognize nor demonstrate effective strategies to promote emerging literacy in the home. Although public awareness and education regarding the importance of early literacy experiences has improved, many parents are unaware that emerging literacy skills can be stimulated in the home to assist their child in the development of reading (Fitzgerald, Spiegel & Cunningham, 1991). Many parents are concerned with their child's emerging literacy skills but are not always confident in their abilities to foster these skills.

The concern for a child's ability to learn to read and write successfully is magnified for the young child with developmental disabilities. Many preschool and daycare settings are providing literacy activities for all of the children. What pre-literacy opportunities have those children with disabilities been exposed to in the home? For

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these families, what are the parents doing in the home to promote and encourage emerging literacy development?

If a child with a chronological age of four or five has language or developmental disabilities, when is the appropriate time to expose this child to pre-literacy concepts? Research has shown that waiting for the child to mature may not necessarily foster the skills needed to benefit from informal or formal reading instruction (Stanovich, 1986). In fact, young children with disabilities benefit greatly from exposure to reading and writing at an early age and at a similar level to their peers without disabilities (Katims, 1991). When children with developmental disabilities are provided with specific literacy activities, they develop a keener interest in books and a more sophisticated "writing" style than children with disabilities who are not provided with similar activities.

Some parents may not realize the importance of exposing those children with disabilities to the same pre-literacy experiences as their peers without disabilities. There is a higher risk for delays in literacy development for those children living in an environment that does not generally provide adequate developmental stimulation (McCormick, Kerr, Mason & Grundel, 1992). In order to provide helpful information and guidance to these parents it is important to learn what their beliefs are about emerging literacy development and what they are doing at home to promote literacy development. As part of a larger study (Goldenberg, 1995), the literacy beliefs and practices of parents who have young children with and without disabilities were examined. This article will present findings related to the literacy beliefs of parents who have children with and without disabilities.

Methods

Participants

Parents from two preschool programs providing services to children with disabilities in three counties in the capital district of New York State were invited to participate in the study. One preschool program was located in a rural area, and the other preschool had classrooms in both rural and urban areas. Each preschool program had both self-contained and integrated classrooms within their respective programs. Some of the classes in which the children were enrolled were self-contained special education classes, while other classes integrated children with and without disabilities throughout the day. In all, 269 surveys were distributed. Approximately 72% of the surveys were distributed to parents who have children with disabilities and approximately 28% of the surveys were distributed to parents who have children without disabilities. A cover letter was included providing a brief explanation of the survey, instructions for returning the survey to the classroom, and an explanation of the incentive for returning the survey. Each parent returning a completed survey received a children's story book as a gesture of thanks.

Survey

Information was gathered through the use of a survey, *The Questionnaire of Characteristics of Literacy Behaviors in the Home* (Goldenberg, 1995). This is a questionnaire intended to measure parental beliefs and practices in encouraging the development of emerging literacy in the home. This survey was developed by the researcher after conducting a thorough review of the literature centered on best beliefs and practices in promoting emerging literacy and found to be standard across the studies reviewed (Refer to Table 1).

TABLE 1: Literacy Beliefs of Parents

Survey Statements
1. I find that my attempts to instruct my child to read by using materials such as flashcards, phonic books, and learning letters and sounds are the best way to prepare my child to read.
2. Children raised in a home where adults read silently to themselves will have a better chance to develop stronger reading skills.
3. I cannot read the same book to my child too often.
4. Reading aloud to my child helps my child to develop strong reading skills.
5. It is important to read a book aloud to my child while my child listens quietly.
6. It is ok to choose a book based on a TV show my child has seen.
7. I should always read a book aloud to my child from cover to cover.
8. I should respond to questions my child asks about the story while I am reading aloud.
9. It is appropriate to choose books that are above my child's age level.
10. Reading aloud to my child is important enough to do every day.
11. I should begin to read aloud to my child after three years of age.
12. I should stop reading to my child when he/she learns to read by him/herself.
13. The most important thing to consider when choosing a book for my child is the interest of my child and myself.

Items placed in the beliefs section of the survey were chosen because they represent popular beliefs about literacy. However, some are regarded as "best practices" and some are contrary to "best practices" as noted in theories on emerging literacy. The survey used a standard Likert scale in which the parents responded to the questions about their beliefs and practices in encouraging emerging literacy. In the case of the first part of the questionnaire concerning literacy beliefs, the respondents indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, are unsure, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement. Table 1 provides a list of the literacy belief statements.

Table 2: Frequency and Percentages of Children's Disability Status

Frequency	Percent	
Disability		
No Disability	30	24.39
Single Disability	58	46.34
Multiple Disabilities	37	29.27

Analysis and Results

Of the 269 surveys distributed, 125 were returned and comprise the sample for this study. This represents a 46.47 percent rate of return. As indicated in Table 2, over 24% of the children participating in this study had no disability. Approximately 46% had a single disability in the area of speech/language development.

TABLE 3: Mean Ratings for Literacy Belief Statements In Rank Order from Highest to Lowest

Item	Belief Variable	N	Mean	SD
10	READ ALOUD DAILY	125	4.748	0.581
4	READ ALOUD	125	4.699	0.68
8	RESPOND TO QUESTIONS	125	4.675	0.794
6	BOOK ON TV	124	4.107	0.889
5	CHILD LISTENS QUIETLY	124	4.000	1.157
1	USE FLASH CARDS	124	3.680	1.235
13	CHILD'S INTEREST	125	3.650	1.299
7	COVER TO COVER	123	3.116	1.392
9	BOOK ABOVE AGE LEVEL	125	2.748	1.303
2	ADULTS READ SILENTLY	124	2.516	1.571
3	READ SAME BOOK	124	2.262	1.41
11	READ AFTER THREE YEARS	124	1.885	1.221
12	READ BY SELF	125	1.569	1.079

The remaining 29.27% had multiple disabilities, which included motor disabilities, mental disabilities and autistic characteristics.

Table 3 contains the rank ordering of the literacy belief statements by all parents from the survey instrument. Reading aloud to their children everyday was ranked the most important belief statement. Strong sentiments were registered by parents that: reading aloud to their children helps to develop strong reading skills; it is ok to select books that are based upon television characters; and that it is important that the child listen quietly while a book is read aloud.

The two belief statements that had the least support from parents were: "I should begin to read aloud to my child after three years of age" and "I should stop reading to my child once she/he begins to read by themselves."

This study also attempted to determine whether differences existed between the literacy beliefs of parents of children with disabilities when compared with the literacy beliefs of parents of children without disabilities. A t-test for an independent sample was performed on the composite of all belief statements and each of the individual belief statements with the existence or non-existence of a disability as the group variable. This enabled the researcher to determine the similarities, differences and levels of significance for responses related to the beliefs parents of children with disabilities have when compared to the beliefs of parents of children without disabilities. Table 4 provides an over view of the results.

As indicated in Table 4, there were no significant differences between the overall mean ratings of literacy belief statements by parents of children with and without disabilities. However, there were four individual belief statements that were statistically significant. When asked whether parents should always read a book aloud to their children from cover to cover (Item 7), the mean rating of parents with disabilities (X = 3.277, SD = 1.44) was significantly higher than those parents of children without disabilities (X = 2.586, SD = 1.053). Therefore, parents of children with disabilities believe more strongly that they should always read a book aloud from cover to cover than parents of children without disabilities.

In regard to the belief that parents should begin to read to their children aloud after the age of three years (Item 11), the mean rating of parents of children with disabilities (X = 2.011, SD = 1.266) was significantly higher than the mean rating of parents of children without disabilities (X = 1.50, SD = 0.938). This suggests that parents of children with disabilities believe more strongly in reading aloud to their children after age three than parents of children without disabilities.

In regard to the belief statement that parents should read aloud daily to their child (Item 10), the mean rating of parents of children without disabilities (X = 4.967, SD = 0.183) was significantly higher than that of parents of children with disabilities (X = 4.674, SD = 0.643). Both groups were strongly in agreement with the statement, but not to the same degree.

TABLE 4: Mean Belief Ratings for Parents who have Children with Disabilities and Children Without Disabilities and Results of Independent t-tests Comparing the Means

Item	Variable	Disabilities With X	Disabilities Without X	t	df	p
1	USE FLASH CARDS	3.774	3.300	1.877	44.6	.067
2	ADULTS READ SILENTLY	2.415	2.867	-1.334	46.9	.189
3	READ SAME BOOK	2.255	2.300	.131	40.8	.896
4	READ ALOUD	4.674	4.800	-1.087	74.5	.281
5	CHILD LISTENS QUIETLY	3.968	4.167	-.929	61.8	.357
6	BOOK ON TV	4.064	4.267	-1.227	60.5	.225
7	COVER TO COVER	3.277	2.586	2.812*	63.3	.007
8	RESPOND TO	4.642	4.800	-1.263	88.7	.210
9	BOOKS ABOVE AGE LEVEL	2.600	3.300	-2.640*	49.1	.011
10	READ ALOUD DAILY	4.674	4.967	-3.963*	122.3	.000
11	AFTER THREE YEARS	2.011	1.500	2.372*	65.6	.021
12	READ BY SELF	1.621	1.467	.622	43.4	.537
13	CHILD INTEREST	3.600	3.800	-0.737	48.5	.465
14	TOTAL	3.352	3.394	-0.711	122.3	.711

* Indicates results of t-test where mean differences were statistically different ($p<.05$) between parents of children with disabilities and those without disabilities.

Note: The parents of children with disabilities group had either N = 94 or N = 95. The parents of children without disabilities had either N = 29 or N = 30.

The last statistically significant comparison of mean ratings was the belief that it is appropriate to choose books that are above the child's age level (Item 9). The mean ratings of parents of children without disabilities (X = 3.300, SD = 1.264) was significantly higher than the mean rating of parents of children with disabilities (X = 2.600, SD = 1.275). Therefore, parents of children without disabilities believe more strongly that it is appropriate to choose books that are above their child's level.

Discussion

A pattern did emerge in the parental beliefs about emerging literacy development. Most parents shared common beliefs about emerging literacy regardless of whether their children had disabilities or not. The most commonly held beliefs of parents were: reading aloud to my child is important enough to do every day (Item 10); reading aloud to my child helps my child to develop strong reading skills (Item 4); and I should respond to questions my child asks about the story while I am reading aloud (Item 8).

These high ratings are very encouraging because these beliefs are consistent with best practices in promoting literacy development. It is critical to provide a reading aloud experience on a daily basis (Isbell & Holmes, 1989; McLane & McNamee, 1990). This daily reading aloud experience is a primary factor in literacy development.

The reading aloud experience is also an interactive process between the parent and child. It is essential that parents consistently respond to questions during the reading aloud of a book to encourage inferential thinking skills and language development (Strickland & Morrow, 1989; Trelease, 1989). While the importance of reading aloud daily was the highest ranked belief statement, parents of children without disabilities more strongly agreed with this belief statement than parents of children with disabilities. Parents who have children with disabilities may assume their children may not benefit as much from being read to on a daily basis. Another possibility is that parents of children with disabilities are, at times, preoccupied with the day-to-day responsibilities involved in raising a child with disabilities and activities, such as daily reading aloud may not be a high priority (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990).

Another belief statement that many parents were unsure of was: I should always read a book aloud to my child from cover to cover (Item 7). Research on best practices has revealed that parents should stop reading if a child loses interest in the book because it could quickly become a nonpleasurable activity and the reading aloud experience could be seen as a chore (Trelease, 1989). However, more parents of children with disabilities agreed with this belief statement than parents of children without disabilities. According to Linder (1990), parents of children with disabilities are often taught a structured approach to working with their children under the assumption that adherence to a more formalized approach at home promotes development. These parents may be more rigid during reading activities because they think it helps their child. Thus, they may believe that there is a need to complete the book from cover to cover at one sitting in order for the child to benefit.

> ...Parents shared common beliefs whether their children had disabilities or not.

While many parents indicated that they disagreed with somewhat or were unsure that it was appropriate to choose books that are above the child's age level (Item 9), more parents of children without disabilities agreed with this belief statement. This belief statement coincides with the research on best practices. Researchers suggest it is important to choose some books that will challenge the child at a higher cognitive level (Fields, Spangler & Lee, 1991; Strickland & Morrow, 1989). This strategy corresponds to Vygotsky's (Vygotsky, 1978) theory on the zone of proximal development . It is essential that children be provided with experiences that are slightly above their developmental level to challenge them so they can attain the next level of development. This can only be realized during interactions with an adult who will provide scaffolding strategies to help the child build the skills to become an effective learner (Bruner, 1982; Nourot, 1991). Too often parents and teachers do not provide the opportunities for children with disabilities to be challenged by activities that are within the zone of proximal development (Cook, Tessier & Klein, 1992).

There were two belief statements that received high ratings by many of the parents but were not consistent with best practices. When requested to indicate whether it was appropriate to select books based on a television show (Item 6), many of the parents in the sample groups strongly agreed with this belief statement. The review of best practices indicated that this is not a recommended practice (Trelease, 1989). While it is very important to choose books that relate to childhood experiences (Strickland & Morrow, 1989), the reading of books based on television shows limits the child's ability to expand their breadth of new experiences and interpretation of events and situations. It also limits opportunities to increase their imagination because characters and events are already clearly defined and interpreted by the shows' creators.

Parents did not believe they should begin to read aloud to their child after three years of age (Item 11), nor that they should stop reading to their child when he/she learns to read by him/herself (Item 12). Because best practices encourage reading to children well before and after they learn to read, this is another promising pattern

Parents who have children with disabilities agreed more that they should wait until their child is three before they begin reading aloud to their child (Item 11) than parents who have children without disabilities. The research on best practices revealed that it is very important for parents to begin reading aloud to their children as soon as they are able to attend, even briefly, to a book (Butler & Clay, 1987; Cook, Tessier & Klein, 1992). However, parents of children with disabilities may feel that since their child is disabled, their young child may not be ready to benefit from a reading aloud experience. Research indicates that even a young child with a disability can benefit from a reading aloud experience (Katims, 1991). A child with a chronological age of four and a developmental age of two, for example, can benefit from some reading aloud activities.

In regards to Item 12, research indicates that parents, as well as other adults, should continue reading aloud to children long after they learn to read by themselves (Feitelson, Kita & Goldsten, 1986; Goodman & Goodman, 1986). This process continues to contribute to the child's language development, recall of critical elements of a story, comprehension of a story and the development of stronger reading skills.

Conclusion

Overall, a common set of literacy beliefs exists between the two parent groups. Most parents in the survey agreed with some belief statements that focused on the importance of reading aloud to their children and responding to questions related to the story.

These same parents agreed with belief statements that are not consistent with best practice including the choosing of a book based on a television show, having their child listen quietly while being read to aloud, and using educational materials such as flash cards to promote literacy development. These parents also indicated that they disagreed with several belief statements that encourage literacy development including the importance of adults reading silently to themselves in the home, rereading the same book often, and providing opportunities for children to be exposed to books above their age level.

Many parents appear to have incomplete information related to literacy beliefs. Parent education programs need to incorporate information related to all of the beliefs in the survey, those consistent with best practice and those that are not. This information will enable parents to provide ongoing quality literacy opportunities to their children.

The preschool years are now widely recognized as a vital time in which many fundamental literacy skills are developed. It is crucial that parents and early childhood professionals provide numerous and diverse opportunities to encourage the development of literacy skills, especially for children with disabilities. The need is much greater due to the challenges faced by these children and their families on a daily basis. The development of early literacy skills should be regarded as a top priority when developing curriculum for these children and parental educational programs.

It is important to keep in mind that parents who have children with disabilities are faced with many demands and need the opportunity to enjoy their children and take pleasure in their time together. Parent education programs should include ways to adapt strategies to meet the specific needs of each child so that parents and their children will be able to enjoy the daily reading aloud experiences that can greatly contribute to each child's literacy development.

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Students' Use of Imagery for Understanding in Individual and Shared Readings of a Short Story

Bonnie C. Konopak, Nancy L. Williams & Ellen S. Jampole

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive study was to examine students' use of imagery in constructing meaning of a short story following individual readings and group discussion. Fifth graders received instruction and practice in using personal imagery, silently read a short story and answered open-ended comprehension questions, discussed their understandings and question responses as a group, and completed a written retelling of the story and a set of multiple-choice questions. Results showed that the students generally used both text- and reader-based information to construct individual interpretations, as well as to negotiate group meanings. Further, in analyzing patterns across the different tasks, these students appeared to share common understandings of character, setting, and plot but constructed different elaborations of these elements' qualities based on personal images evoked.

Reading research is currently addressing the important role of imagery in a reader's understanding of text (Cothern, Konopak, & Willis, 1990; Gambrell & Jawitz, 1993; Long, Winograd, & Bridge, 1989). Once considered "a secondary or 'epiphenomenal' mental process" (Sadoski, Goetz, Olivarez, Lee, & Roberts, 1990, p. 55), imagery, or a non-verbal personal representation of a concept or experience, is now thought to integrate with verbal processes "in the full reading experience" (p. 56). Given earlier research on readers' imagery and understanding (e.g., Cothern et al., 1990), the present study sought to further explore this relationship following elementary students' individual and shared readings of a short story.

In studying reading comprehension, research has focused on the transactional nature of text- and reader-based factors (Purves, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1976). That is, while readers are engaged with the same text, they may have different interpretations depending upon the different personal experiences they bring to their reading. According to Golden and Guthrie (1986), the text acts as a surface blueprint, or a highly organized arrangement of cues, that the reader uses to construct meaning. Given both explicit and implicit cues, readers may respond in different ways: as a member of a general audience, a particular cultural group, or an individual. Consequently, the meanings developed may be in common, socially specific, or personally significant (Purves, 1978). "The text is thus polysemous in nature, generating multiple interpretations" (Golden & Guthrie, 1986, p. 411).

In addressing this transaction between text- and reader-factors, Paivio (1986) argues that both verbal and nonverbal factors work interconnectedly to influence a reader's understanding. That is, the verbal system, concerned with abstract linguistic aspects, provides logic, order, and direction to language processing. In contrast, its nonverbal counterpart, particularly concerned with experiential information, provides imaginal representations that guide and inform understanding (Gambrell & Jawitz, 1993; Sadoski, Paivio, & Goetz, 1991). Thus, meaning develops when a reader constructs relationships among text cues and personal knowledge, facilitated by the use of personal imagery or "mental pegs" that tie verbal and nonverbal information.

In investigations of imagery and reading, researchers have found evidence of imagery's influence on a reader's response to literature. In studying spontaneous imagery use, Sadoski and his colleagues (e.g., Sadoski, Goetz, & Kangiser, 1988; Sadoski et al., 1990) noted that adult readers' reported mental images for a variety of narrative features without specific instructions to image. Further, they found that their subjects' images tended to be consistent with the story read and include elaborations from other personal experiences. In probing for imagery use, Cothern et al. (1990) showed that young readers also reported images of narrative characters; however, these images converged and diverged from the text and from each other. Using short stories that deliberately contained explicit and implicit information, these researchers indicated that, although the adolescents recalled similar explicit information, they generated different elaborations of implicit text information concerning each character's appearance, personality, and lifestyle.

> ...readers... have different interpretations depending upon the[ir] different personal experiences...

Given imagery's role in text understanding, several empirical studies have examined the instructional implications of inducing imagery as a comprehension strategy. Generally, this research compared students trained in imagery usage with students not receiving

special instructions on recall and recognition tasks following text reading. Overall, the results indicated significantly increased comprehension for those students taught to use imagery, based on both expository texts (Gambrell & Bales, 1986; Williams, Konopak, Wood, & Avett, 1992) and narrative texts (Konopak, Williams, Granier, Avett, & Wood, 1991; Long et al., 1989). As Gambrell and Jawitz (1993) concluded, constructing mental images encourages the use of prior knowledge as part of creating representations of text. Consequently, those students taught to use imagery as they read are better able "to construct inferences, make predictions, and remember what has been read" (p. 265).

While these studies have shown that imagery is not only used during reading but can facilitate comprehension, no research has examined its influence on a reader's understanding following individual and shared readings of a text. Both components, however, are normally part of an instructional routine which may include an introduction, silent reading and task completion (e.g., short-answer questions), and follow-up class discussion. In particular, research on group discussion has shown that, while individual interpretations will vary, students will attempt to negotiate with their peers on common and/or alternative meanings. In her study of group process, Golden (1986) found that eighth graders' understanding of short stories (a) included both textual and reader-based information, (b) moved from private to group interpretations through discussion, and (c) shifted in story element emphasis depending on the nature of the text (e.g., a survival story focusing on character). Similarly, Eeds and Wells (1989) found that fifth and sixth graders were able to (a) articulate individual understandings of a story, (b) reconsider their interpretation as they heard alternate views, and (c) share personal experiences that triggered similar identifications in other students.

Based on these findings, the present study sought to examine fifth graders' use of imagery and understanding of a short story within the following instructional routine: personal reading and question answering; group discussion of responses; and individual completion of recall and recognition tasks. To extend previous studies on imagery that compared the overall performance of experimental groups, this study focused on the content and source of ideas generated, searching for patterns within and across tasks. Similarly, to extend previous research on story interpretation that examined group processes, this study examined on the participants' use of personal imagery as a basis for individual understanding and group negotiation.

Method

Participants

The participants were 15 fifth graders from three self-contained classes at suburban elementary schools. These schools were chosen by the researchers because they enrolled heterogeneous student populations, while the three classes were recommended by the principals as typical of their schools. Within each class, the teacher was asked to purposively choose five students who were representative of their peers in terms of ability level, gender, and race/ethnicity and who might be willing to participate. The final student group included (a) all average and above readers, as identified as their teachers; (b) six females and nine males; and (b) three African American and 12 Anglo students. Upon being given the purpose of the study, each student agreed to take part.

Materials

Materials included an 1,100-word short story, "Willie's Bad Night," taken from a children's anthology (Lawson, 1976). The story describes the adventures of a fieldmouse and an encounter with his human neighbors. In the first half, Willie accidently falls into a rain barrel and is rescued and cared for by "the Folks;" when he does not return home, his animal friends fear the worst and anxiously search for him. In the second half, Willie, upon awakening the next morning, plans and executes his escape from the house and returns to the burrow. This story was approved by the three classroom teachers as appropriate for these students; further, it had been used successfully with elementary students in a previous investigation (Konopak et al., 1991).

For the purposes of this study, the story contained both explicit and implicit descriptions of the setting, characters, and events to allow for similarities and differences among participant responses. For example, while Willie was explicitly labeled a fieldmouse, no personal (e.g., age, appearance, character) traits were presented. However, a statement such as "Haste and excitement made Willie inexcusably careless" might suggest that he was young and/or thoughtless. Similarly, while the story moves Willie from the rain barrel to a cardboard box inside the house, there is no agent mentioned. However, the following passage indicates that it was the Folks' activity:

> As the water closed over him for the last time, he was dimly conscious of a noise and a brilliant glare of light. Then the light went out, everything went out. A long time later, he never knew how long, Willie's eyes fluttered open...He seemed to be lying in a nest of some soft white stuff which was very comfortable, he could see the glow of dancing flames and feel a gentle warmth.

In addition, a set of 12 open-ended comprehension questions was developed to focus on setting, characters, and events in the story. For each question, the participants were asked to *describe* the story element as a means to evoke personal imagery, following Cothern et al.'s (1990) use of probes. Example questions included "Describe where the story takes place," "Describe Mr. Muldoon," and "Describe the search when Willie does not return home."

Finally, two posttest measures, a free recall test and a multiple-choice test, were developed to examine both recall and recognition of the story. The free recall test consisted of a blank sheet, with direc-

tions to the participants to write everything they could remember about the story. This measure was used to examine each participant's understanding as it developed from the personal readings, to the shared discussion, and finally to the individual posttest tasks. The multiple-choice test consisted of 10 items, each containing a stem and four alternative answers. The participants were asked to circle the letter of the correct answer for each question. This measure was used to assess each participant's recognition of story elements explicitly described in the story.

Procedure

The study was conducted over four consecutive days in the three fifth-grade classrooms. Each class's 50-minute reading or language arts period was utilized for instruction and posttesting. One researcher per class met with the participants in a quiet area of their room, using lesson plans prepared by one of the researchers. In addition, each researcher took field notes during the sessions to record the participants' comments.

On the first day, the researcher introduced the story and led a group discussion on the participants' experiences with small animals living in the country. Next, she introduced the notion of generating personal images to enhance understanding and guided the participants through practice imagery exercises (e.g., common objects such as flowers and food; appearance and activities of a family member). Subsequently, she presented four vocabulary terms that were important to the story as well as were highly imageable: *Kentucky Bluegrass, consternation, burrow, rolled lawn.* The participants were asked to image each term and to share these images and possible definitions with the group. For example, on the first term, many pictured a blue-colored grass that is only found in the state of Kentucky, while on the last term, several pictured rolls of grass (sod) being laid down to make a lawn. As each term was discussed, the researcher guided the discussions to meanings that were appropriate to the story context. Finally, the participants were given the first half of the story to read silently and the first six comprehension questions to complete. All stories and questions were collected at the end of the period.

On the second day, the researcher reviewed the first day's activities, providing a brief summary of the story and practice on the use of imagery. Next, she introduced four additional vocabulary terms: *hearth, desperation, scurry,* and *mole run*), using an instructional routine identical to that used the previous day. Finally, the participants silently read the second half of the story and completed the last six comprehension questions. Again, all student materials were collected at the end of the period.

On the third day, the researcher briefly reviewed the two previous days' activities and passed back all student papers as preparation for group discussion. For each question, the participants first presented their individual responses, including personal imagery associated with these responses. Next, they examined each other's answers, discussing similarities and differences and using the story for verification. From these interactions, they attempted to negotiate a shared meaning of the story elements. For this session, the researcher also audio-taped the discussions for later transcription. Finally, on the fourth day, the participants silently completed the free recall and multiple-choice posttest measures, with all finishing the two tasks within 30 minutes.

Scoring. Scoring of the comprehension questions and free recalls followed a three-step procedure. First, the responses were parsed into idea units, defined as one simple piece of information (Konopak et al., 1991). Next, each idea unit was categorized as explicit (directly from the text) or implicit (combining text and reader knowledge) (adapted from Pearson & Johnson, 1978). Then, for the purposes of this study, the implicit idea units were subcategorized as consistent (comporting with explicit text information) or not consistent (contradicting explicit text information) with the story. For example, a response describing Willie as a "grey fieldmouse" was parsed as two idea units: (a) "grey" as implicit and consistent with the story, and (b) "fieldmouse" as explicit. However, a response describing the gardener as a "mole" was marked as one implicit idea and inconsistent with the story.

Percentages of agreement between two researchers on scoring one-fourth of the responses were (a) .90 for parsing the idea units, (b) .92 for categorizing the idea units, and (c) .85 for subcategorizing the implicit idea units. On the three procedures, differences were resolved through discussion; then, one researcher completed the scoring. To examine the recognition test, each multiple-choice question was marked as correct or incorrect by one researcher.

Results

First, descriptive statistics were used to examine explicit and implicit idea units and multiple-choice questions across all participants. On the idea units, Table 1 presents means and standard deviations for the comprehension questions and the free recall test. For the recognition test, the mean number of correct items was 7.40 (SD=2.13). Then, using these written results, as well as their field notes and tape transcriptions, the researchers searched for

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Idea Units

Measure	Explicit	Implicit	Implicit Consistent	Implicit Inconsistent
Comprehension Questions	15.00 (4.45)	8.87 (5.07)	7.13 (4.45)	1.74 (1.98)
Free Recall Test	8.73 (4.42)	4.34 (2.47)	3.67 (3.52)	0.67 (1.54)

patterns across (a) individual ideas generated on Days 1 and 2, (b) group discussion on Day 3, and (c) individual ideas generated on Day 4.

On the individual responses to the comprehension questions, approximately two-thirds of the idea units were categorized as explicit, while one-third was categorized as implicit. Generally, the explicit ideas included similar information for each story element across participants. The following examples illustrate responses for setting, character, and event elements. When asked to describe the Animals, responses included (a) generalizations (e.g., Willie's family), (b) kinds of animals (e.g., mole, rabbit, squirrel), and (c) specific names (e.g., Father, Phewie, Little Georgie). When asked to describe where the story took place, responses included (a) locales (e.g., the country) and (b) specific places (e.g., the Folks' home). When asked to describe how Willie had an accident, responses usually were that "Willie was careless and fell in a rain barrel."

However, the implicit idea units generally varied in details across participants, although nearly all were consistent with the story. For example, while Willie is described only as a fieldmouse, responses varied on his physical appearance (e.g., a white/brown/grey mouse) as well as on his personal attributes (e.g., a stupid/spunky/brave mouse). Similarly, while the story indicates a countryside setting, responses ranged from a specific state (e.g, Kentucky) to types of country fields (e.g., cotton). The few inconsistent ideas generated usually contradicted story events. For example, while the story details Willie's cautious move around the library and dash out the doorway, responses included other agents (e.g., Mr. Muldoon chased Willie out of the house; the Folks carried Willie out).

During their group discussions the following day, the participants presented their individual ideas and then attempted to reach consensus on each comprehension question. Generally, they were united on elements explicit in the story but agreed to disagree on descriptive details that were implicit. For example, in describing the Folks' cat, the participants agreed that Mr. Muldoon had frightened Willie; however, they disagreed on the cat's nature (e.g., Mr. Muldoon was a sneaky/lazy/mean/calm cat). Similarly, when describing how Willie made his way back to the Animals' burrow, they noted that he had gone down a mole run; however, they disagreed on its location (e.g., front lawn, back lawn, garden). When ideas inconsistent with the story were raised, the group usually challenged the reader's response and asked for verification from the story. For example, one participant described Tim McGrath, the Folk's gardener, as a mole, while another participant identified Mr. Muldoon as one of the Folks. When questioned, both participants reviewed the text and agreed that their answers were not accurate.

On the free recall test, the proportion of explicit and implicit idea units was similar to that of the comprehension questions, although fewer idea units were generated overall. While the explicit idea units again followed the story, the implicit idea units included broader themes as well as descriptive details. For example, when describing Willie's accident, several participants noted that "Willie almost drowned in the rain barrel," a conclusion not reached when answering the comprehension questions. In addition, many participants elected to include evaluative comments on important elements of the story. For example, Willie was praised for his courage in surviving the accident and making his way home as well as criticized for his carelessness that precipitated the incident. In addition, several participants provided a moral at the end of their recalls, although the story did not contain one. These included such statements as "You can get into trouble if you're careless" and "You should be kind to animals." On this task, very few implicit idea units were inconsistent with the story.

On the multiple-choice test, participants scored nearly 75% correct, generally demonstrating that they understood the basic storyline. The majority of incorrect responses were found for three questions. One question asked how the Folks behaved when Willie was hiding; while the story states that they pretended not to see him, several participants indicated that the Folks actively searched for him. A second question asked how Willie got out of the house; although the story describes his slow movements around the room and final run to freedom, several responses indicated that the Folks put him outside. A third question asked where Willie went when he got outside; while the story describes his jump down a mole run, several answers indicated that he ran back through the woods.

In tracing the idea units across the four days, it appeared that these participants generally retained their own ideas from the individual readings on Days 1 and 2 to the free recall on Day 4 if (a) they were explicit and (b) they were implicit but consistent with the story. Not retained were those explicit and/or implicit ideas challenged by the group on Day 3. In addition, the participants included some ideas on the free recall task that they did not include on their comprehension questions; generally, these emerged from the group discussion and involved broad story elements rather than descriptive details. Finally, while the majority of student ideas on the free recall and recognition tasks were consistent, a minority of ideas did not agree. For example, a participant who noted on the free recall that Willie jumped down a mole run on the front lawn also indicated on the multiple-choice test that Willie ran through the woods to safety.

Discussion

Given the use of imagery in understanding text, an examination of personal images evoked during reading is important. That is, if images vary according to the individual reader, then story meanings may be constructed differently. Further, these images may be influential during group discussion as readers attempt to negotiate a shared meaning. While limited by the use of one story and the brevity of data collection, the results of this study suggest that students appear to have similar understandings given explicit text information but somewhat different understandings

...personal imagery can be an important influence on students' individual readings...

given implicit text information, findings that emerged across the individual and group tasks.

The idea units generated on the comprehension questions, as well as on the recall test, indicate clear patterns of convergence/divergence across the participants (Golden & Guthrie, 1986). On the comprehension questions, the majority of explicit ideas given were cued by the questions and the availability of the short story. As several participants commented, they were accustomed to "finding the answers in the book and writing them down." However, the implicit ideas given appeared to be a result of the participants' activation of personal experiences before reading and their imaging while reading.

For example, during the researchers' introduction of the story, several participants volunteered different animals found in the countryside, such as squirrels, raccoons, and snakes. When triggered by the question to describe the Animals, they responded with these earlier lists, although only a squirrel was mentioned in the story. Further, given their group discussions before and after reading, these participants' physical descriptions (e.g., Willie was a white mouse with pink ears) and personal attributes (e.g., Mr. Muldoon was mean) of the characters appeared to be tied to their own experiences. Such results support Cothern et al.'s (1990) findings that students use implicit text information to evoke images reflecting their own personal background. In addition, these results also support students' understandings and internalizations of different literacy genres. That is, fifth graders generally are very familiar with narrative story structures, such as "Willie's Bed Night," that involve animals as characters with human traits. Within this genre, they are aware of a protagonist (Willie), an antagonists (Mr. Muldoon), the protagonist's dilemma (escape), and, in this instance, a moral (be kind to animals).

On the recall test, fewer idea units were generated, perhaps due to the lack of specific probes. However, the proportion of explicit and implicit idea units was similar, as were the content of the ideas. That is, the participants summarized the story, primarily including explicit information to describe the major setting, characters, and events. Their implicit ideas, though, varied somewhat from those on the comprehension questions. The Results, these ideas were expanded to include broader themes, such as the fortitude of a small mouse in the country, in addition to the descriptive details and evaluations of the characters and events. As noted by Konopak et al. (1991) in their study of imagery and literary text, it may be that, when asked to retell a story, these participants were accustomed to drawing conclusions based on text cues as well as offering a moral or lesson to be learned.

In examining the different influences of silent reading and shared discussion on the recall task, it appeared that these participants primarily retained ideas from their individual readings, ideas that were both supported and not supported by the group discussion. That is, in addition to the majority of ideas common across students, they also carried over those original elaborations that distinguished their understandings. For example, if a student felt that Mr. Muldoon was a "mean" cat following the individual readings, this image was also presented on the recall measure, regardless of the group's discussion concerning alternative views of the cat's nature. Further, they carried over only a few new ideas that they gained from the group activity. Generally, these ideas focused on broad themes, such as conclusions drawn about Willie's accident in the rain barrel. Such findings extend Golden's (1986) and Eeds and Wells's (1989) research by showing that, while students will negotiate meaning within a group, they may return to their personal understandings when given follow-up individual tasks.

Finally, in examining the recognition task, students answered nearly 75% of the items correctly, thus indicating a common understanding of explicit text information. Incorrect responses tended to cluster around three items. It may be that this information was less evident to the students in the text or that it contradicted their prior knowledge and expectations. For example, in two items, students incorrectly credited the Folks with seeking out Willie and helping him to escape from the house. They may have expected that, having rescued Willie from the rain barrel, the Folks would continue to actively assist him.

Overall, this study indicates that personal imagery can be an important influence on students' individual readings and shared discussion of a short story. While previous research (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Golden, 1986) showed that students are willing to consider alternatives to their own ideas and to negotiate a shared group meaning, the present findings revealed that these students generally reverted to their original ideas following the group discussion. It may be that the influence of prior knowledge, as triggered by personal imagery, has a more powerful effect on a reader's understanding. Future research could more fully address the use of imagery during classroom instruction and learning as well as focus on different sources of information that influence meaning development.

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Developing Children's Phonemic Awareness: How and Why

Donna M. McDonald

ABSTRACT

Research has demonstrated that phonemic, or sound, awareness is a prerequisite skill to successful reading development. Students who can discriminate and manipulate the component sounds in the stream of meaningful spoken language are better equipped to handle the abstract cognitive demands of formal reading instruction. This article defines and discusses the importance of phonemic awareness, describes a pilot training program for kindergarten, and suggests materials for assessing students' phonemic awareness.

The term phonemic awareness stems from the word "phoneme", which is a unit of sound and refers to one's ability to perceive a spoken word as a sequence of individual sounds (Lewkowicz, 1980), manipulate individual sounds in the speech stream, and control phonemic units of speech (Yopp, 1988). There are a total of 44 phonemes, or speech sounds, in the English language, each of which can be represented symbolically by one or more letters. The abstraction and application of the system of sound/symbol relationships are the basic tasks in the cognitive processes of reading and spelling. Ball and Blachman (1991) describe the nature of the relationship between reading, spelling, and phonemic awareness as concerns the beginning reader:

> The importance of this relationship becomes clear when one considers the factors critical in reading an alphabetic writing system. To read (and spell), the beginning reader must make use of the alphabetic code. Thus, the student must come to realize that words can be broken into syllables and phonemes, and that the phoneme is the unit in the speech stream represented by the symbols in an alphabetic script. To a person with well-developed phoneme awareness, our alphabetic system appears to be a reasonable way to represent our language. To those with little or no phoneme awareness, the system probably appears arbitrary (p. 51).

There is an extensive body of research which suggests that phonemic awareness, or phonological awareness, as it is sometimes called, is the most accurate predictor of a child's ability to succeed in the task of reading (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Lewkowicz, 1980; Lundberg, Frost & Peterson, 1988; Stanovich, 1994; Tunmer & Nesdale, 1985; Yopp, 1988). Further evidence suggests that some students do not develop phonemic awareness without intervention (Ball & Blachman, 1991), and furthermore, that lack of phonemic awareness "may be the most important barrier to reading acquisition yet discovered" (Tunmer & Nesdale, 1985, p. 417).

Several researchers have devised studies for the purpose of determining the efficacy of training programs for children at the preschool, kindergarten, and first grade levels. Results indicate that experimental groups of kindergarten and first grade students who have received training in phonemic awareness out-perform control groups of students on auditory analysis tasks (Cunningham, 1990). Not only do the trained students perform better on phonemic tasks, there is evidence to suggest they score higher on tests of reading decoding and comprehension (Cunningham, 1990).

Lack of phonemic awareness training may have far reaching effects, particularly for students with decoding deficiencies. Students who lack phonological sensitivity fail to make the connection between spoken and written language. Consequently, they are unable to apply grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules which enable them to develop automaticity and speed in word recognition. As a result, comprehension is impaired (Tunmer & Nesdale, 1985).

> ...Phonemic awareness...is the most accurate predictor of a child's ability to succeed in...reading.

Students who lack phonological sensitivity can be trained to discriminate, isolate, and manipulate speech segments with relative ease. Phonemic training activities are easily integrated into the existing language arts curriculum. Since phonemic training involves listening and speaking tasks almost exclusively, the training can begin with a minimum of staff development and at no cost.

Phonemic Tasks

According to Lewkowicz (1980), there are ten phonemic tasks which vary in levels of cognitive difficulty (See Figure 1). These tasks also differ in their predictive correlations to subsequent rate of learning to read novel words. Yopp (1988) has identified rhyming and phoneme blending tasks as the easiest for kindergartners, whereas phoneme deletion tasks are the most difficult. Phoneme segmentation and phoneme blending most nearly mimic the spelling and decoding tasks (Lewkowicz, 1980). Although it has been suggested that rhyming ability has little impact on later reading and spelling achievement, it is a phonological task which requires auditory analysis skill. Furthermore, the ability to substitute

initial consonants and sounds in rhyming word sets is a reading strategy which has a high rate of utility for beginning readers (Bruck & Treiman, 1992; Lewkowicz, 1980).

Figure 1: Common Phonemic Awareness Tasks and Sample Instructional Questions.

1. **Sound-To-Word Matching**. Students are given a target sound and are asked to determine whether a word contains the sound, usually in a specified location within the word.

   Q: Does *bat* start with /b/? Does *cup* end with /p/?

2. **Word-To-Word Matching**. Students are given two words and must determine if they begin or end with the same sound.

   Q: Does *bat* start like *ball*?
   Does *man* end like *pin*?

3. **Recognition of Rhyme**. Students must determine if two words are identical in sound, with the exception of the phonemes immediately preceding the vowel.

   Q: Does *bat* rhyme with *cat*?

4. **Isolation**. Students are asked to produce a sound from the initial, medial or final position in a target word.

   Q: What is the first sound of *bat*?

5. **Phonemic Segmentation**. Students are asked to separately and sequentially articulate each sound in a target word.

   Q: What are the sounds in *bat*? /b/-/a/-/t/

6. **Counting The Phonemes**. Students are asked to count the number of sounds they hear in a target word.

   Q: How many sounds do you hear in *bat*?

7. **Blending**. Students are given a sequence of separately articulated sounds in a target word, and are then asked to identify the word.

   Q: What word is this: /b/-/a/-/t/?

8. **Deletion Of A Phoneme**. Students repeat a target word, and then must change the word by omitting one of the phonemes.

   Q: Say *bat*. Now say it without the /b/.

9. **Specifying Which Phoneme Has Been Deleted**. Students repeat two target words, and then must identify the sound that was omitted from the first word in order to make the second word.

   Q: Say *bat*. Now say *at*. Which sound has been left out?

10. **Phoneme Substitution**. Students are asked to repeat a target word, and then substitute a phoneme in a specified location within the word.

    Q: Say *man*. Now say it with /p/ instead of /m/.

Phonemic awareness activities may be categorized as simple or compound phonemic tasks, depending on the degree of cognitive demand or task difficulty (Yopp, 1988). A task analysis identified seventeen cognitive processes that are utilized during phonemic activities. Phoneme deletion, the most difficult of the phonemic tasks, for example, utilizes twelve cognitive processes. Rhyming, on the other hand, requires five cognitive operations (Yopp, 1988). Simple phonemic activities, in unranked order of difficulty are as follows: phoneme segmentation, sound isolation, phoneme blending and phoneme counting. Compound activities include phoneme deletion and word-to-word matching.

The simple and compound phonemic awareness distinctions may be useful in making instructional decisions regarding phonemic training, particularly at the preschool and kindergarten levels. The teacher may choose to focus on a few of the simple phonemic awareness tasks and forego the more complex tasks until the students become familiar with the practice of isolating and manipulating speech sounds outside of the contextual realm of listening and speaking as communication.

Instructional Strategies For Developing Phonemic Awareness

A kindergarten, phonemic awareness training program, involving approximately 80 students, was piloted at the Guardino Elementary School in the Thousand Islands Central School District during the 1994-1995 school year. The rural district is organized to include two, K-5 elementary schools, a 6-8 middle school, and a 9-12 high school. The district is located on the St. Lawrence River in upstate New York, 20 miles north of the City of Watertown and 90 miles north of the City of Syracuse. The district encompasses an area of approximately 175 square miles and has a population of 7,500 residents. The current district enrollment is 1,350 students. The enrollment at Guardino Elementary School is 476 students, 80 of whom are military dependents.

The following describes some of the phonemic tasks and corresponding training activities that were used in four sections of half-day kindergarten classes. Most of the activities were meaning-based; that is, target words and sounds utilized both the students' names and words from classroom experiences. Many of the phoneme discrimination tasks were accompanied by pictures or other visual representations of phoneme segmentation, such as blocks or index cards.

Sound-to-word matching: This task was most often carried out by having students sit, stand, line up, etc., if their name began with a target sound. Also when given target sounds from stories, children were asked to hold up a picture card if it matched the target sound.

Kindergarten students Alicia Ortiz and Katlin Campbell practice the phonemic task of word-to-word matching.

Photograph courtesy of Lori A. Wiley.

Word-to-watching: Students compared their names deciding for example, if Sierra and Sarah began with the same sound. Alliterative materials, such as *A My Name is Alice* (Bayer, 1984), were used to develop students' sound discrimination skills.

Recognition of rhyme: Poetry charts, nursery rhymes, oral games and songs, were used to reinforce the students' ability to distinguish rhyming elements.

Phoneme substitution: Although different from the phonemic task of rhyming, students practiced this skill by substituting phonemes in the initial position when orally presented with word families. Instructional materials included poems and songs by Raffi (1985), and books, such as *The Hungry Thing* (Slepian & Seidler, 1988).

Activities described above were practiced in sessions ranging in length from three or four minutes to thirty minutes. Many activities were used after the children had listened to a story or completed a project and were repeated over a period of days, as part of an instructional unit. The activities were often used as "fillers," when students were preparing to leave the classroom, for example, or during instructional transition times.

Interactive Writing

The phonemic activities described above were an integral part of the curriculum rather than a systematic and sequential training program (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Lewkowicz, 1980; Lundberg et al., 1988). Students regularly practiced the phonological training tasks of isolation, segmentation, phoneme counting, blending, and substitution during interactive writing lessons, where the teacher and students worked collaboratively to compose and record a piece of writing. This process utilized all of the language arts but most particularly listening and speaking, or, auditory analysis and sound production.

There is evidence to suggest that "the effect of phoneme segmentation training on reading and spelling appears greater in those studies in which the relationships between sound segments and letters were explicitly taught" (Ball & Blachman, 1991, p. 52) and that this is "the most pedagogically sound method of phonemic awareness training" (Ball & Blachman, 1991, p. 64). Instructionally, then, the interactive writing lessons formed the framework of the phonemic training program. The lessons were thirty minutes in length and scheduled for three times in a six-day cycle. Two sections each of half-day, morning and afternoon kindergarten classes met jointly, with an average of forty students in a training session with three teachers.

Presented here is an exemplar of a phonemic activity using interactive writing. The interactive writing lesson began with the teacher and students generating statements about a particular topic of instructional import. The teacher acknowledged student responses so that meaningful communication remained the focus of the activity. The teacher modeled appropriate sentence structure and speaking habits. For example, when generating sentences about school, a child offered a one word answer - music; the teacher responded with interest, "Music! Can you tell me something more about music?" In

Kindergarten student Sonja Fleck, records a word during an interactive writing lesson.

Photograph courtesy of Lori A. Wiley.

Kindergarten student Ben Barton, helps his classmates reread a sentence during an interactive writing lesson.

Photograph courtesy of Lori A. Wiley.

this way, the teacher redirected the child, thus helping him to rethink and rephrase his answer in a complete sentence.

Once a sentence was decided upon, the teacher reiterated the sentence and directed the students to repeat the sentence along with her. Given the constraints of time, the teacher decided upon the sentence selection and order in the writing piece. Because this was the first encounter with composition for most students, it was critical that the teacher explain the reasons for the decisions. For example, when writing a story about a field trip, the teacher told the students that "We went to the fire station" was a good way to begin the story because it helped other readers know what the story was about.

Next, the teacher directed the students to listen for the number of words they heard in the sentence. As she and the children repeated the sentence, the teacher arranged blocks, or placed index cards in a pocket chart to represent one-to-one word correspondence. Afterward, the teacher and students counted the objects together to determine the number of words in the sentence. To reinforce the concepts of voice-to-print match and one-to-one correspondence, the teacher had the children repeat the words in the sentence again while she, or another student, pointed to each block or card.

Once the students determined the number of words in the sentence, the teacher proceeded to draw a line for each of the words on chart paper. While drawing lines, the teacher asked the students about word length by saying, "Does that sound like a long word or a short word?" If students were uncertain of word length, the teacher introduced syllabication by directing the students to clap the parts of the word with her. (e.g., "Listen to how many parts we can hear in the word 'station'. Clap those parts with me. Sta-tion. Two parts. That is probably a long word. Let's draw a long line for that word.") After the lines were drawn, the teacher added a punctuation mark while explaining its purpose.

The prewriting phase of the lesson was useful in developing the concept of 'word' and phonemic awareness of sentence-to-word. In a kindergarten classroom in September, an investment of ten to fifteen minutes was expended on this phase of the lesson. During the remainder of the lesson, only one or two words were likely to be written. As students became familiar with the process and gained knowledge of letters and sounds, the amount of writing increased to one or two sentences per session.

After prewriting, the teacher modeled the phonemic tasks of isolation and segmentation and guided the students through the actual writing. For example, in the sentence, "We went to the fire station.", the students first wrote the word 'we'. The teacher isolated the initial sound in the word, 'we' and directed the students to produce the sound with her. Thereafter, the teacher asked whether anyone knew the name of the letter that makes the /w/ sound. If not, the teacher furnished the information, and asked a student to write the letter at the beginning of the first line on the chart paper.[1] Laminated paper was used so that incorrect student attempts could be easily erased and rewritten. The teacher asked the students to name the letter that was just written and to make the sound of the letter. The teacher and students then listened for the last sound in the word 'we'. For example, the teacher may have said, "/W/-/e/. Listen for the last sound. /W/-/e/. Make that sound with me. /W/-/eee/. What letter makes that sound?" Most children were able to respond correctly to such requests, even though many were unable to visually identify the letter "e". Again, the teacher had a student come to the chart to write the letter and thus the first word was written.

During the interactive writing lessons, it was practical to give some spelling information outright, particularly for silent letters, irregular spellings, vowel diphthongs, and consonant and vowel digraphs. As students became more sophisticated in their knowledge of letter/sound correspondences, sound boxes, which consisted of a series of connected squares representing the sounds contained in a word, were introduced to visually represent phonemes and spelling patterns. For example, there are three phonemes, or sounds, in the word, 'neat'. The sound boxes, therefore, would look like this when completed:

n	e	t

When using the sound boxes, the teacher directed the students to say the word and listen for the sounds. Rather than segmenting the sounds sequentially, students were asked to tell which sounds they heard in the word. Again using the word, 'neat', if a student heard the /t/, the teacher pointed to the boxes and said, while stressing the /t/,

Kindergarten student, Julie Wilder, practices auditory analysis during a word-to-word matching activity.

Photograph courtesy of Lori A. Wiley.

"Neat. Where do you hear, /t/, in 'neat'? At the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of 'neat'? N-ea-t."

Once the position of the sound was identified, the student wrote the corresponding letter in the appropriate box. The teacher and students continued the process, with the teacher adding silent letters to the boxes where appropriate. For instance, in the word, 'neat', most children heard the sound of long "e" in the medial position. After the sound was identified and the corresponding letter written, the teacher explained that the letter "a" helps the letter "e" to make that sound and added the letter to the box.

As words and sentences were written, it was important for students to reread the text. Although the students often relied on auditory memory during rereading, the teacher modeled the blending of letter sounds during this part of the lesson. A pointer helped students attend to the visual cues. As students became more proficient, greater emphasis was placed on reading, and the lessons included instructional strategies similar to those used with big books.

The nature of the interactive writing lessons changed during the course of the school year. After a month or two of training, children counted words in a sentence using their fingers as well as learned directionality, proper spacing of words, and punctuation. By midyear, many students independently segmented the sounds in words and counted phonemes. As they became facile with letter-sound correspondences, some students accurately spelled two-letter and three-letter words, and sight words that were written repetitively throughout the year. As children demonstrated readiness, the teacher introduced other writing conventions, (e.g., capitalization rules), reading concepts (e.g., main idea and details), and word identification strategies.

The training program at Guardino Elementary School was highly successful and made a marked difference in entering first grade students' willingness and ability to write independently. Many students who were targeted to receive reading support services upon entering first grade knew concepts of print and understood one-to-one correspondence as well as sound/symbol relationships. Moreover, they could substitute initial consonants when presented with word families and made attempts at segmenting and blending unknown words.

Assessing Students' Phonemic Awareness

A child's level of phonemic awareness is predictive of later reading and spelling achievement, and research indicates that phonemic training can result in significant gains in both of these areas. Diagnostic assessments allow for early identification and training intervention for students who lack phonological awareness. There are four published tests of phonemic awareness currently available.

The ***Test of Phonological Awareness*** **(TOPA)** (Torgensen & Bryant, 1994) may be administered individually or in group settings and requires approximately twenty minutes. The student test booklet uses rows of pictures to measure the child's awareness of individual sounds in words. Two versions of TOPA are available, the kindergarten version and the Early Elementary version, suitable for students in first or second grade.

The ***Lindamood Auditory Conceptualization Test*** **(LAC)** (Lindamood & Lindamood, 1971) is administered individually. The LAC test can be used at any age level, providing the student understands the concepts of same and different, can number to four, and is familiar with left-to-right progression. Students use manipulatives to segment the constituent phonemes in words. The complete test kit includes Examiner's Manual, an audiocassette, blocks, two cue sheets (English and Spanish) and protocols for Forms A and B of the test.

The ***Test of Awareness of Language Segments*** **(TALS)** (Sawyer, 1987) consists of three subtests which measure the student's level of language awareness and determine which units of language the child is able to manipulate. The individually administered, 46-item test is designed for children aged four through seven, although it can be used with older students who have learning problems. The TALS kit includes the examiner's manual, record forms, and a set of blocks.

Another useful test is the ***Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation*** (1988). The 22-item test takes five to ten minutes to administer individually (See Yopp, 1995) . Students are asked to segment a given word by articulating the component sounds in order. The mean, or average test score, for kindergarten students is 11.39 with a standard deviation of 8.18. The test protocol may be reproduced and is, therefore, available at no cost.

Conclusion

Because phonemic awareness correlates highly with reading and spelling achievement, it has gained much attention during the past few years. Numerous studies indicate that beginning readers who have had the benefit of phonemic awareness training score higher on tests of reading and spelling than either their peers or older age cohorts who have not received training.

Since reading is interpreting encoded oral language, it makes sense to bolster students' awareness of and control over speech sounds and patterns. Language activities and games, books, poems, and student-generated writing can easily form the basis of a phonemic awareness training program. This minimal investment of time and resources can provide maximum benefits to young students who are preparing to become readers and writers.

Note: Kindergarten students may need help identifying and forming letters when writing. The use of an alphabet chart or strip is recommended.

The author wishes to thank Susan H. Healy and Lori A. Wiley for sharing their knowledge and expertise in early childhood education, and for their efforts in developing a successful kindergarten phonemic awareness training program.

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Learning from Teacher-Research: Journal Writing with Kindergarten Children

Marilyn S. Clarke

ABSTRACT

This article describes the evolution of a kindergarten journal writing program using teacher-research. Grounded in educational literature as well as reflective classroom practice, the author chronicles her attempts, challenges, and triumphs. Viewing her program as a work in progress, suggestions are offered for further changes in the journal writing program.

The notion that writing is an important component of young children's literacy development is well-supported (Brock & Green, 1992; Fisher, 1991; Goodman, 1986; Harp, 1991b; Reutzel & Fawson, 1990). Young children's early writing experiences correlate with development in other aspects of literacy such as reading, speaking and listening (Bromley, 1989; Goodman, 1986; Harp, 1991b; Lamb, Hewitt & Reed, 1989; Richgels, 1995). Studies have demonstrated that young children have an early print awareness (Bromley, 1989; Lamb et al., 1989) and can be emergent writers even before they are able to read (Lamb et al., 1989; Richgels, 1995). Consequently, including writing as an integral part of a classroom literacy program seems sensible.

In planning a writing component for the literacy program for my half day session of 23 kindergartners, I considered the above research. Various opportunities and materials for children's writing were available in my classroom. Among these were a classroom writing center stocked with an assortment of paper, writing tools, and illustrated word reference books as well as paper and writing tools in other interest areas, such as the block and housekeeping areas. I also involved the children in teacher-directed writing experiences (e.g., pen pal letters and classmade big books).

By adding personal journal writing, I hoped to provide yet another opportunity for my kindergartners to reap the benefits of involvement in a purposeful, real writing experience (Bromley, 1989; Mulhall, 1992). While giving the children an additional means of communication through print, journal writing demonstrates the relationship between oral and written language and reinforces reading development (Bromley, 1989). I modeled my journal program on that of a fellow kindergarten teacher — Mrs. F. — who taught two half day sessions of 22 and 19 children respectively.

Mrs. F.'s Journal Program

At the beginning of the month, Mrs. F. gave each student a new journal consisting of approximately 12 sheets of 8.5" X 11" white copier paper stapled between colored construction paper covers. Children's journals were kept in their classroom cubbies and written in during whole group journal writing time or during any of the daily choice times. Mrs. F. modeled journal writing on the day that the children received their first journals thereafter served mostly as audience and scribe.

Children were free to choose the topic of their entries as well as the number of journal pages they wished to work on during a journal time. They first created their illustrations, then either wrote their own entries using various developmental writing methods or dictated to Mrs. F. who scribed for them. Mrs. F. met individually with children during spare classroom moments to conference about their journals. At month's end, children shared their journals with each other and/or Mrs. F. before taking them home.

While this system worked very well for Mrs. F. and her students, I had difficulty with it. My modeling seemed inevitably to result in many clone entries in the children's journals. When I tried journal writing as a whole group experience, I was unable to individualize learning or even look at each child's journal. A long line of restless children formed as they waited for my assistance. When I was working with one child, there were frequent interruptions because of the need for my simultaneous supervision of the remaining 22 children in the class.

It was equally difficult for me to find enough additional time to meet with children for individual journal work. This was especially true when a child came to me with several pages of illustrations and lengthy dictation for me to scribe. Finished journals piled up on my desk. Frequently, enough time elapsed between journal completion and conferencing that children could no longer read their developmental spelling or had forgotten their original reasons for creating illustrations. Even the most enthusiastic class writers soon lost interest in their journals. Kindergartners felt frustrated and I honestly considered abandoning journal writing. Fortunately, the near demise of a kindergarten journal program coincided with my introduction to the concept of becoming a teacher-researcher in the classroom.

Teacher-Research

I had never envisioned myself as a researcher because I thought research needed to have a scholarly hypothesis at its base. I soon learned that a topic needed only to be based on my reflective thoughts about my own teaching and classroom. Posing my topic in the form of an open-ended question allowed flexibility to consider

other avenues, if they arose during the research process (Hubbard & Power, 1993). I was encouraged when I realized I was already doing teacher-research when I applied my reflections on past classroom experiences to current practice or when I evaluated the results. In becoming aware of and formalizing my thoughts, my research enhanced my ability to reflect (Isakson & Boody, 1993). Combining this new-found information with classroom observations and brainstorming resulted in my research question: How do I design an effective kindergarten classroom journal program? I planned an eight-week long study that would involve my kindergartners with journal writing. Specifically, I wanted to foster children's literacy through a journal program that would also be manageable in a half-day program.

Application of Research to Program

I began by improving my classroom's print environment (Brock & Green, 1992; Fisher, 1991). That is, poetry charts, class-authored stories, daily schedules, job lists, experience charts and informational posters were displayed at the children's eye level around the room. Children experienced the use of print that was a natural and meaningful part of their day (Brock & Green, 1992). The children were familiar with classroom print and it was available for use as a resource for writing. For example, children might use classroom print as models for letter or word formation, spelling, topic selection or as a source for copying word-for-word. Thus a print rich environment was a featured aspect of my classroom.

Understanding the importance of a regularly scheduled time for journal writing (Brock & Green, 1992; Bromley, 1989; Hipple, 1985; Lamb et al., 1989), I decided to include journals as part of each day's small group time (i.e., generally around 30 minutes). Small group time consisted of four or five children participating in teacher-planned activities as they worked either with parent volunteers or me. Children participated in one activity daily on a rotating basis such that by week's end each child had experienced all of the activities. Children were heterogeneously grouped. Group membership changed weekly to allow children to work, over time, with all their classmates.

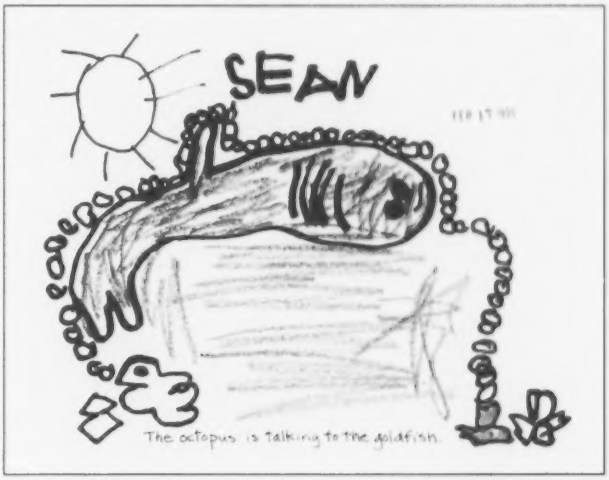
Journal writing during small group time allowed me to work with four or five children at one time. Thus I was better able to focus on individual children's needs, give immediate feedback, and actively demonstrate support (Schickedanz, 1986). Having parent volunteers working with the remaining small groups of children reduced problematic classroom management interruptions. Additionally, small group time was virtually the only time slot in which journal writing could be scheduled in a half day kindergarten session that also included circle time, outdoor play, choice time, snack, and semi-weekly participation in physical education class, interclass reading partners, library, computer lab as well as pullout sessions of speech and language therapy for a few children.

Unfortunately, the rotating nature of the small groups did not allow for daily journal writing as recommended (Brock & Green, 1992; Bromley, 1989; Hipple, 1985; Lamb et al., 1989). However, one of my research goals was to re-establish a personal journal program that could be managed on a regularly scheduled basis in a half-day program. Beginning on a small scale enabled me to maintain an ongoing program that re-interested the children in journals and lead to feelings of achievement for all of us. I hoped to build on this achievement base and eventually increase opportunities for journal writing. Along the same lines, I chose not to issue monthly journals but to give new journals to children after they had completed the ones on which they were working. I felt that this allowed each child to work at their individual pace and removed the end of the month "deadline" of the previous journal program. It seemed to me that I had been unwittingly pressuring children by, from their perspective, an arbitrary timetable.

Remembering the prior clone entries, I recognized both the importance and impact of my own participation as a writing model for my kindergartners (Brock & Green, 1992; Mulhall, 1992; Strickland & Morrow, 1990). To avoid children adopting "my" writing, I modeled journal writing in front of the whole class during the week prior to the beginning of the children's journal program (Brock & Green, 1992; Mulhall, 1992).

I verbalized my thoughts about my choice of topic and how I choose various methods of print representation so that the children could understand more clearly as I illustrated and wrote using big book sized paper (Fisher, 1991; Mulhall, 1992). At children's request, I scribed their dictation until they became more experienced journal writers (See Figure 1). A letter was sent home before the children began the journal writing program which described the developmental stages of writing. Suggestions were given to help parents support their child's individual writing level (Reutzel & Fawson, 1990).

Figure 1: Teacher records child's message



When I met for the first journal writing session with each of the small groups of students, I briefly shared my journal, pointed out my use of scribbling, letter-like symbols, random letters, copying print, developmental, and conventional spelling as some possible ways of writing in a journal. I emphasized the value of each level of writing as an indication of growth as a thinker, writer, and learner (Gentry, 1987). I then read a picture book that had been authored and illus-

trated by the same person (e.g., Eric Carle). Following a discussion of the words and illustrations, I told the children that it was their turn to author and illustrate their own books (Brock & Green, 1992; Fisher, 1991). Each child then received a journal, the same 8.5" X 11" type previously used, and the journal writing routine was established (Fisher, 1991). The children wrote their names on the cover of their individual journal under the existing words, Journal; Written and Illustrated by_____. In order for the children to begin to understand what a page is, they were initially limited to one page per day (Mulhall, 1992). The next step, as shown in Figure 2, was to record the date on the page with a date stamp (Brock & Green, 1992; Mulhall, 1992), which can also be used as an easy way of identifying growth patterns during the year (Church, 1991).

Following a brief group brainstorming session to generate possible journal topics, the children began by illustrating their pages (Fisher, 1991). In order for them to understand that they were "... in charge of their own writing" (Winston & Low, 1990, p. 45), children were free to choose their own topics (See Figure 3) and were encouraged to talk and help each other as a "...community of learners..." (Fisher, 1991, p.12). While the children had the option of dictating to me, they were reassured that they could take risks and try their best in writing and spelling (Goodman, 1986). As, for example in Figure 4, where the illustration is labeled using the initial letter of a word. Children were encouraged to assume responsibility for their work and "...to write independently, using whatever knowledge they [had] gained from exposure to charts, books and other print forms" (Strickland & Morrow, 1990, p. 442).

Upon completion of a journal entry, each child shared with me. Children dictated or read what they themselves had written (Brock & Green, 1992). Excluding my scribing of their dictation, I transcribed children's writing in small pencil-written conventional spelling somewhere on the page (See Figure 5). This decision was made based on my past experience with many children's frustration at their inability to read their developmental spelling and writing after an interval of time had passed. My transcription was presented to the children not as a replacement for their writing but rather as an augmentation. Children were strongly encouraged to share their journals (Brock & Green, 1992) with the other children in their small group as well as with the kindergarten teacher in the adjoining classroom or with the school principal. Journal sharing provided mutual assessment opportunities for noting growth. After sharing, children placed their journals in the classroom journal basket. Any remaining small group time was spent in the reading and writing areas of the classroom.

Figure 2: Dating the child's writing is helpful for documentation of growth.

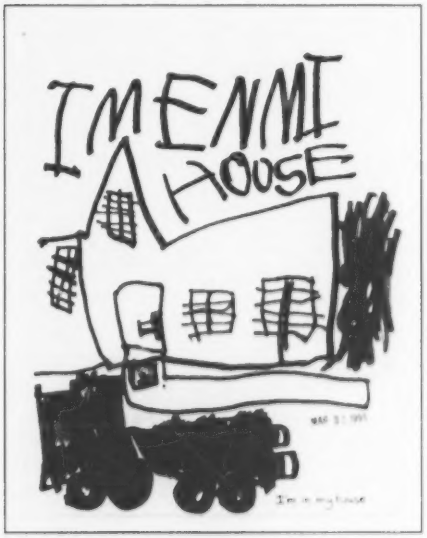


Figure 3: Conversations among students led to this child's piece.

Figure 4: A single letter labels this illustration.

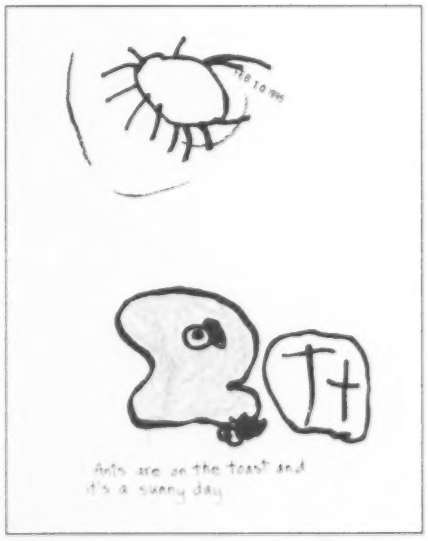


Figure 5: Conventional spelling helps the writer re-read.

Results

While the research and planning for a classroom journal program was much more involved than I had anticipated, positive results were soon very evident. Children immediately responded to the additional print in the classroom as was evidenced by their increased interest in the posters, charts, poems, lists, and schedules. They found this print to be meaningful in ways that were both communal (e.g., the day's line leader) and individual (e.g., resources for writing). Including journal writing as part of regularly scheduled small group time insured each child an opportunity for immediate feedback (Bromley, 1992). Children were also able to anticipate journal time and plan for their topics (Bromley, 1992; Lamb et al., 1989). I came to know my kindergartners better and, therefore, better facilitated their individual literacy development (Dyson, 1990). The importance of my modeling of thought processes and writing levels was obvious as children used similar strategies while writing in their journals. Most importantly, children no longer generated clone stories because they understood the purpose of writing: to convey meaning.

> ...came to know my kindergartners better and... better facilitated their individual literacy development.

Scheduling journals during small group time had many benefits, but it also limited the children's journal writing opportunities. This problem was solved by introducing a different type of journal that the children could keep in their cubbies (Weiss, K.J., personal communication, March 2, 1995). Because these "cubby" journals were available in the writing center, children were free to write in their journals during choice times. Children had complete "...ownership of their learning..." (Harp, 1991b, p. 9) in these journals. They could choose to write whatever amount on whatever topic throughout the day. The children were encouraged to share these journals, but they might also choose to keep them privately.

Using parent volunteers with other small groups certainly decreased interruptions during journal writing time. Parents expressed appreciation of the information they had received prior to the beginning of the journal program. Their increased understanding of emergent writing helped them to understand and accept such notions as the relationship between opportunities to create good developmental spelling and increased reading ability (Richgels, 1995).

The children's attitudes toward journal writing became increasingly positive as the program continued. While many children initially requested that I act as scribe, most moved quite naturally to doing their own writing. A few kindergartners needed more encouragement and modeling before they began to write. However, by the last weeks of the study, all children were writing

Figure 6: A child's journal writing.

(See Figure 6). The children had begun to view themselves as writers (Reutzel & Fawson, 1990).

The journal writing program produced some unanticipated results. Many children's general confidence levels seemed to grow as they became more experienced writers (Barone & Lovell, 1990). Children also began to act as each others' sources of information during journal time. Increased respect among classmates seemed to be fostered as children used each other as writing resources and informally shared their journals.

Future Program Plans

Based on the success of this research, journal writing will continue to be included as a component of my kindergarten literacy program. As I plan for the future, I will remember that my role "...is foremost one of learner" (Harp, 1991b, p. 8). The journal program will always be a work in progress with ongoing teacher-research and reflection generating program modifications.

Future plans include initiating a journal program early in the fall of the school year. I will offer a fall evening workshop as part of an ongoing effort to educate parents about the writing process (Mulhall, 1992). Hopefully, this workshop will enable parents to understand and support their children's writing and, moreover, will subsequently interest parents in becoming classroom language arts volunteers.

> The journal program will always be a work in progress with ongoing teacher-research...

I am also considering creating a traveling writer's kit with materials and guidelines for parent/child contributions to our class journal (Reutzel & Fawson, 1990).

My kindergartners currently participate in a shared reading partners program with third graders that could be extended to include journal writing. Following experience in personal journal writing, kindergartners and third grade reading partners could be paired for buddy journals. Each pair of students would keep a mutual journal through which they would communicate to each other (Bromley, 1989).

During this study, assessment of the children's journals was conducted using a student/teacher conference format. While I will retain this assessment method, I am exploring using other ways of assessing. Keeping in mind that writing assessment must emphasize the process rather than the product (Harp, 1991a). Observational anecdotal records on post-it notes, which can later be transferred to specific children's pages in a loose leaf binder, is a possible method (Church, 1991). The use of an observation form specifically designed for recording emergent writing development and topic choices in kindergartners' journals is another potential option (Brock & Green, 1992).

Summary

No one journal program will be effective in every classroom. My teacher-research has enabled me to design a journal writing program which is both highly effective for my kindergartners and manageable within my classroom schedule. Acknowledging the my present journal program is a process which is subject to change, I look forward to consciously guiding its evolution through continued teacher-research.

With twelve years of prior experience as an early childhood educator, Marilyn S. Clarke is in her sixth year as a kindergarten teacher in the Pittsford Central School District, Pittsford, New York. She received her Master's of Science Degree in Elementary Education from Nazareth College of Rochester in May of 1995. Ms. Clarke is particularly interested in the language and literacy of young children.

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Non-ability Grouped and Multi-level Instruction in Fourth Grade: An Application of the Winston Salem Project

Cynthia J. Grau

ABSTRACT

This teacher-research chronicles the experiences of a fourth grade teacher's revisions of her inner-city literacy program. Grounded in research and reflective practice, her class, the literacy program, and the results are shared. Insights are offered regarding future instructional changes.

Most adults can remember back to their elementary years and with few exceptions, recall learning to read in classrooms which incorporated the typical three reading groups. The euphemisms for these groups varied from classroom to classroom but we realized from the very beginning of first grade whether our teachers considered us proficient readers or not. For those of us labeled "good readers" learning to read became a pleasure. We quickly learned to read. However the memories of poor readers are probably not as positive because their instruction, reading materials, and social groupings offered a far poorer educational experience than better readers.

Today's society is no longer satisfied with what, in my generation, was seen as a fact of life; that is, some children will excel in academics, whereas others will not. We accepted that some would become the blue collar workers, and life was still good. However, within the last two decades and with the rise of the computer age, this is no longer true. Today the outlook for young adults without a high school diploma, and even those with only a high school diploma, is becoming bleaker because blue collar jobs have disappeared.

Ability grouping restricts the amount of time children spend reading in school. Good readers read about three times as many words per day in reading groups as poor readers (Allington, 1982). Poor readers do much more skill and drill work and much less actual reading than their advanced counterparts. Good readers are much more likely to be presented lessons emphasizing meaning, while poor readers' lessons are more likely to emphasize sounds, letters, and words. Poor readers spend much of their time reading orally instead of silently as good readers do. The Bureau of School Program Evaluations (1976) found that the amount of oral reading is negatively correlated with achievement; in fact, silent reading was the single most important predictor of reading achievement. Children must participate in authentic literacy in school in order to develop patterns of lifelong literacy. Furthermore, oral reading creates more opportunities for students to be off-task, since only one reader can be directly involved in oral reading.

Sheer quantity of reading experiences is an important factor in children's literacy development. Allington (1977) contends that, "If they don't read much, how they ever gonna get good?" Students spend up to 70% of their time allocated for reading instruction in independent practice or seatwork. This is an hour per day in the average classroom (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985). Current interventions are not designed to give low-experience children more opportunities to read, write, and listen to stories, but rather provide these children with more skill lessons through remedial and special education. Their instruction is slowed down instead of accelerated. If we slow down curriculum introduction for children who are having difficulty learning to read, often for no other reason than lack of experiences in literacy, how will we ever expect them to catch up? Allington (1983) argues that good and poor readers differ in their reading abilities as much because of differences in instruction as variations in individual learning styles or aptitudes.

Adams (1990) extensively reviewed the existing literature on beginning reading and concluded that children need a rich variety of reading and writing experiences as well as some direct instruction in letter-sound patterns. On the basis of this research as well as their experiences as educators, Cunningham, Hall, and Defee (1991) developed an approach to reading that is multi-method and applied it in the Winston Salem area. They incorporated instructional strategies from a variety of reading theories which include the literature-based approach, phonics approach, language experience/writing approach, and the basal approach. Delpit (1988) argued that children, especially urban African American children, need to be explicitly taught skills for reading. Delpit explained that we cannot assume one instructional approach will work equally well for all learners. Therefore a combination of many approaches is sensible for inner-city youngsters.

Children must participate in authentic literacy to develop patterns of lifelong literacy.

Cunningham, Hall, and Defee's (1991) multi-level model is designed to meet the diverse needs of heterogeneous classes through cooperative learning groups. Allington (1994) asserts the rather straightforward premise that children are more likely to learn what they have been taught than what they have not been taught. Since

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> Schools need to reassess the premise that the bell-shaped curve represents the expected distribution of reading ability.

society is now demanding and expecting advanced literacy proficiency of virtually all students instead of what historically was only expected of but a few (Marshall & Tucker, 1992), schools are beginning to undergo substantial change.

Wheelock (1992) contends that the different curricula used in different tracks and reading groups limit the opportunities of some children to achieve anything but the basic levels of literacy proficiencies. Wheelock further suggests the elimination of these different goals and curricula to ensure that all will have opportunities to learn to read. Schools need to reassess the premise that the bell-shaped curve represents the expected distribution of reading ability. It is time to reject the notion that only a few children, those who score on the correct end of this normal curve distribution, will become proficient readers. Therefore, the practice of ability grouping, which ensures that some children will not receive sufficient instruction to adequately develop their literacy skills, needs to be reevaluated.

Many children, especially in urban and rural settings, begin school with few experiences with books, stories, and print. Schools confuse lack of experience with inability. Schools label these children as *at-risk, developmentally delayed, limited ability,* and the like. Such terms confuse limited literacy experience with intellect.

The impetus for this teacher-research derived from my real world concern that my students, many of whom were labeled as at-risk due to economic and family challenges, experience literacy success. To this end, I implemented and evaluated the impact of using Cunningham, Hall and Defee's multi-method, multi-level model of literacy instruction in my fourth grade, urban classroom.

Method

Mine is a fourth grade class in an urban setting. After reviewing reading records from the previous year and collaborating with the remedial reading teacher to assess current reading ability levels using *Connections*, the Macmillan Reading Program currently adopted by the District, 11 out of 24 students in my class were identified as below grade level. Three were reading at a second grade level, four at a beginning third grade level, and four at a mid-third grade level. Of the remaining 13 students, five were reading at a fourth grade level and seven were reading at least at fifth grade level. These basal tests included some or all of the following: vocabulary, phonics, comprehension selections, cloze and oral sight words. Although I felt using informal assessment such as a Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 1994) would have been more accurate, this was not a viable option nor a good use of reading instruction time for an entire class. According to their school records, the results obtained from the testing were almost without exception in line with the basal book they had completed last year according to their records.

I had spent the previous year wrestling with developing an effective reading program for my class. Since it was my first year as an elementary teacher and the District had a mandated basal program, I used the basal program supplemented heavily with available trade books. The majority of my class had grade appropriate literacy skills, and the few who didn't were at a mid-third grade level. Therefore I divided the group into two ability groups. However, many of the trade books were read by both ability groups. While I had been pleased with the progress both groups made during the year, I was eager to put my experience and knowledge as a graduate reading student into practice to develop a better literacy program for the next class I taught. I frankly found it hard to believe that almost half of my current class did not have the ability to be reading at grade level. I believed that the children's environments as well as unsuitable or insufficient teaching practices were likely responsible for their current difficulty in learning to read, rather than any diminished intellectual capacity.

As I examined the reading abilities of each of my fourth grade children, I discussed with my colleagues how I might improve the use of the basal. I realized that the approach I had used the previous year and the general approach being used by other teachers in the building were just not working well. I knew ability grouping and basals had been the norm in the school, but the results seemed to be getting more disastrous each year. Although basals were the mandated reading program, I could implement the basal program as I chose.

Change was in the air and was being supported by the District as well as building administrators. The district had a long tradition of trying many different reading approaches; each was used just long enough to recognize its shortcomings and then abandoned, moving onto yet another approach with different shortcomings. They never seemed to be one reading program that met all the needs of our population. It was becoming apparent to me that more and more of my colleagues were grasping for literacy solutions for their students.

I began talking with teachers and reading the literature. Hall, Prevate, and Cunningham (1995) influenced my thinking greatly. Based on my students's need for a sound literacy program and my interpretation of research, I decided to implement Cunningham's multi-level, multi-modal approach. Although this model was designed for first grade, I felt the model would work equally well in a fourth grade classroom. It was important to me to change the instructional environment of my poor readers to approximate more closely to that of good readers. I also knew I had a good support system in place in my building because two other third grade teachers with graduate reading degrees were implementing this approach.

My Fourth Grade Class

I firmly believed that in order to be successful academically, students needed to be successful in literacy. Based on this assumption I decided to devote my entire morning to language arts instruction.

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Since school started at 9 a.m. and we ate lunch at 11:30 a.m., that would give me a block of 2 1/2 hours to devote to language arts. This was the case except for two days when we had specials for 35 and 60 minutes. On these days, especially on the 60 minute special day, I needed to continue language arts in the afternoon.

The program designed by Cunningham et al. (1991) divided language arts into four thirty minute blocks. I decided to use the same four approaches to reading: a basal/trade book block, writing block, phonic block, and self-selected block. I hoped that by using these four reading/language arts approaches all my students' needs would be met.

Rather than four distinct thirty minute blocks, I linked these approaches together in my 2 1/2 hour time frame. I began with an hour of writing and phonics instruction. Frequently, writing began with a warmup question to which my students responded in their journals. Upon arrival, my fourth graders immediately knew to sit down, get out their journal, and begin this warmup. The response usually required a few sentences to answer and always dealt with something that we were doing or studying in our curricula. The topics selected ranged from creative thinking, problem solving, and critical inferential thinking to verbalizing the steps how to solve a math problem. I allowed time for those students who wished to share their responses. At least once a week we had a 10-minute mini-lesson on grammar or mechanics of writing. Thereafter we moved directly into the writing process, the standard five step process with minor adaptations (i.e., brainstorming drafting, conferencing, editing and finalizing). I had modeled this process as a whole group and continued to do so on a individual basis. We started the year by doing a lesson on brainstorming and each child had a list of self-selected topics. Using a story map, we consistently reviewed narrative structure and the five Ws (who, what, when, where, why) as ways to organize their ideas. Next they wrote sloppy copies or rough drafts. Before the idea conference, students reread their writing to make sure the stories were organized and made sense. The idea conference started out with the listener, who was either a peer or an adult, telling the author why the story was good and continued with a discussion of ways to improve the piece. A questionnaire telling what was interesting and good, as well as what could be improved upon was completed by the conferencer.

The class was divided into three groups and every third week each group was required to idea conference with an adult. A few mothers whom I had trained in this process, participated during writing time and were available to idea conference. Writers were then encouraged to use the ideas given by peers and adults to improve and revise their stories. Next, they edited their stories. Students were required to edit initially on their own. Because my students' writing abilities varied greatly, this meant different things to different students. Some were still working on complete sentences, capitalization, and end punctuation marks, whereas others were working on more advanced punctuation and specific mechanics (e.g., quotations needed in writing dialogue). After they had edited as well as they could independently, they consulted with an adult for further review and individualized editing instruction. Then they were ready to write their final copy. Once a week I allocated time for students to share their final copies.

Two days a week we did a phonics lesson where we did Making-Big-Words, a multi-level, hands-on, spelling and phonics activity developed by Cunningham and Hall (1994). Working in pairs, students were given nine to thirteen letters to make words. This activity lasted for 35 to 45 minutes. The students made fifteen to twenty words beginning with short words and continued with bigger words until the final word, which required students to use all the letters they have received, was made.

Since this is a lengthy activity, and we did not do the writing process on these days. Making-Big Words was an activity that the children just loved and through which they discovered letter-sound relationships and learned to look for patterns in words. The students worked in pairs writing down all the words they could for about 20 minutes. It was amazing that many of the pairs were able to come up with the mystery "big" word. Subsequently, students helped the teacher sort words for patterns. They could pull out words that began alike, had a particular spelling pattern, or vowel sound. They also could sort for endings, prefixes, suffixes, homophones, and compound words. Making-Big-Words provided practice for the slowest learners and a challenge for all. Decoding a word successfully occurs when the brain recognizes a familiar spelling pattern. If the pattern is unfamiliar, the brain searches through its store of words with similar patterns. In other words, the brain "chunks" the word not based on rules per se, but on its incredible knowledge of inter-letter frequencies (Cunningham & Hall, 1994). Because Making-Big-Words gives students familiarity with manipulation of words, they learn to recognize many new words as well as discover the patterns that allow them to decode and spell new big words.

The next hour and a half focused on reading activities. The first twenty minutes was spent doing silent sustained reading (SSR). During this time students were asked to select a book at their independent reading level that was interesting to them and join me in silently reading. Most students enjoyed this time. Each student was required to read at least one self-selected book per month and complete different activities on their book ranging from making a character sock puppet to a poster advertising the book. Subsequently, many other students read the "advertised" book during SSR. A reading log of books read was kept by each student for their portfolio.

After silent reading time we moved into our cooperative reading groups. Students worked in pairs, a more-proficient reader was matched with a less-proficient reader. I usually spent 5 minutes introducing or guiding the class in the reading selection. I modeled a variety of reading strategies during this time, such as purpose setting, predicting, emphasizing making sense while reading, and using syntax clues to help identify new words. We then moved into actual reading time or working on questions or activities pertaining to what we had already read. When the pairs were reading, they alternated pages orally. When they were working on questions or activities, students took turns being responsible for answers. This ensured that there was shared responsibility for the outcomes of the group.

The remedial reading teacher participated during this portion of the reading for thirty minutes, three times a week. My colleague

and I would go from group to group monitoring reading, working with students individually on reading strategies, and checking comprehension. This teaching partnership allowed for a fair amount of individualized instruction within the pairs. Since we worked with all of the pairs at some time or other, lower readers were not singled out in a conspicuous way. During this time all students read the same chapter book at a fourth grade level or stories from our Macmillian fourth grade basal series. If we were reading a chapter book, students answered questions based on Bloom's taxonomy in their reading journal on completed chapters. When we read a basal story, skill and comprehension pages for that story were completed.

The last twenty minutes of reading was spent with my reading aloud to students seated on our rug. The students looked forward to this time. A chapter book, which tied to a theme we were studying, was typically chosen for this time. New vocabulary words were discussed in the context of the story and students were given opportunities to share similar experiences and thoughts on the selection. Occasionally I read aloud to the class from books which were included in a thematic unit we were doing. Even though these books were somewhat above fourth grade level, I asked the students to follow along with their copies. I believed this was another shared reading experience that might increase my students' proficiency in reading.

I also tried to challenge my superior children with chapter books above a fourth grade level. Since these students usually finished their work at a quicker pace than the majority of students throughout the day, I asked them to read particular books that I thought they would find interesting in their spare time. They wrote a few sentences at the end of each chapter in their reading response journal. There were five types of questions that they could choose to respond to, namely: summarization; prediction; what they could relate to in the story; what they wondered about, or what seemed strange/different to them; whether they could be friends with a particular character and why or why not. By encouraging them to do this extra reading and response, I felt that I was better meeting their needs.

I used classroom observation as a primary method for evaluating the effectiveness of this multi-level, multi-method model of literacy instruction. Student interviews via journal writings, direct questioning, and a formal questionnaire were also used. My interviews addressed their comfort level using cooperative groups for language arts as well as feelings of competence in literacy. I informally assessed reading on a daily basis while working with individuals in their pairs. Writing was assessed as I met with students on a individual basis during the writing process. At least once every three weeks I worked with each student to review their writing during an idea or editing conference; I taught them needed writing skills at this time. Students' comprehension was monitored daily through reading response journals and class discussions. I also assessed individual comprehension within pairs as I moved from pair to pair during discussion and comprehension question time. Results were compared to my previous experience using ability groups for reading and my experience with other models I have utilized for teaching language arts.

My Findings

The results of this multi-level, multi-method reading program were impressive for the majority, if not all of my students. I found this approach to be of particularly great benefit for my lower readers. Their confidence during reading grew in leaps and bounds. I seldom heard any students say that the reading assignments were too hard for them. This might have been an expected comment since almost a half of my class was reading below a fourth grade level, and we were reading a fourth grade basal and trade books. However within the confines of the pairs, all the lower readers were supported. There was one student who became frustrated at times, especially if her partner was absent. She often let her partner do all the work and if her partner commented on this, she became upset.

It amazed me from day one how on-task all pairs were during paired reading. Reading time became the easiest time of the day for me. I spent little time on classroom management, especially when compared to the previous year when I had done two ability groups, or even to other times during the day. This comment was also heard from one of the other third grade teachers using this approach who had a very challenging class of thirty students. Because of this, nearly all my energies were spent going from pair to pair modeling strategies for reading, such as use of semantics, syntax, and graphophonics. I also could teach the more proficient reader how to help the weaker reader through modeling and discussion. Occasionally, I would have to speak to children who were not attending to their assignment. However, this happened much less frequently than when these same children were working individually at other times during the day. Students were more likely to be unfocused when answering questions than when reading; moreover they tended to be particularly unfocused when doing the workbook pages for their basal readers. This did not surprise me because some of these tasks were of much lower interest to students than the reading of the stories.

I was also pleasantly surprised to see how my lower readers felt comfortable taking risks in this setting. I encouraged groups to give each other time to figure out new words or to skip an unknown word and come back to it after finishing the sentence. This was adhered to on a regular basis, and often times unknown words were successfully figured out. They had been taught that reading must make sense, so I frequently heard both good and poor readers self correct. No reader, no matter how weak, ever seemed hesitant to take their turn reading. Occasionally more proficient readers noted how slow the process was and were told it was okay to say more of the unknown words to speed the process up. It was also interesting to see the poor readers correct the proficient readers. This would happen regularly because even good readers make minor miscues when reading orally. In most cases this was accepted, and it did much for the poorer reader's perception of themselves as a reader.

We do little "round robin" reading in our classroom, but when I do, everyone wants to read. It seems that everyone feels good about their reading and wants to demonstrate their ability to the class. I attribute this to their comfort level reading in pairs which extends to reading in a group.

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Comprehension questions and skill pages in their basal workbooks were also done in their pairs. I doubled the amount of time explaining skills and concepts from what I could do last year when I had ability groups. Also, I worked with pairs individually instead of letting one group do theirs as seatwork while I work with a second group. I believe the quality of work in their workbook pages improved, but this remains an area of concern. Last year, I found that many students did a poor job on their workbook pages regardless of which group they were in. Simply stated, they put forth little effort. This year, I encouraged pairs to alternate answering questions, whether workbook questions or comprehension questions to a tradebook. Although students were supposed to be on the same page and same question at the same time, it remained a struggle because the more able students either went ahead or complained that they do all the work. I have seen some improvement, but I believe it will continue to be a struggle at least for the near future. I spent much time having the pairs reread directions for what they are to be doing as well as monitoring their answers. Last year I was unable to do this because of the large grouping. I believe that I am doing a better job teaching skills, purely because I can give more individualized attention to students.

When I asked the students to write to me in their journals telling me how they felt about reading in pairs, the majority of responses were favorable. Seventy-seven percent (77%) said that they enjoyed working in pairs, 18% said they did not and would rather work alone, and 5% said sometimes they liked it and sometimes they did not. Of the 77% who said that they enjoyed working in pairs, 68% liked it because they could help each other, while 9% liked it because they got to meet new people and make new friends. I was surprised that a few wrote down that they liked working in pairs because of the newly formed friendships. Although I believed this approach would have a positive effect on sociometric measures, I did not expect students at this age to realize or voice this. The one student in my class who was involved with the gifted and talented program said that she liked working in pairs because she "...had someone to help her!" This, of course, could not have been the real reason because she did not need any help, yet she saw pairs as benefiting her. Of the 18% who did not like working in groups, their reasons were either that their partner would not cooperate or would not help them. The negative responses were all from proficient readers, except for one. One proficient reader commented that she "...never likes to work with other people." She was the only one in my class who rarely followed my instruction to alternate reading and answering questions with her partner. She sat by her partner but usually would not communicate. In her case I often selected another proficient reader as her partner.

Because I had done the same general writing process last year and felt I had good results, I expected my writing program to be successful. Because I had a small number of parents willing to come in to help me during the writing hour, we were better able to address individual writing needs. This year I also incorporated more skill instruction in my writing lessons and expected better quality in the mechanics of their writing. I saw the truth of the common sense phrase, that "students are more likely to learn what they have been taught." I asked children to share their writings from their warm-up by reading exactly what they had written. This presented a challenge to some of my poorer readers and writers. Since writing can be considered "reading from the inside out," this was an important approach. As they wrote they also spelled words that they later encountered in their readings. Invented spelling incorporated the phonics they had learned. Making-Big-Words was another important aspect in our language arts program in creating better writers and readers. Students not only learned more about phonics, they also acquired many new vocabulary words.

By using all the main philosophical approaches to language arts, I feel confident that I met the needs and learning styles in my classroom. Because each year I am seeing more and more of a discrepancy between my good and poor readers, Cunningham's multi-method approach seems especially valid. I am not sure whether any one method is truly superior to another. I feel that each approach has its merits and shortcomings. Because children learn in different ways, it is important to incorporate all of them.

I have observed that working in cooperative pairs, with one high and one lower ability reader, has defined a different socialization opportunity. It has been my experience that children generally choose friends with academic abilities similar to their own. Higher ability students were rarely good friends with lower ability students and vice versa. I have seen some indication that this may not be totally the case in my current class. Just the other day one of my students, who attends the resource room, proudly told me he had gone to the house of one of my more able students. They had worked together on our last tradebook. Whether this accounted for this friendship or not, I cannot say for sure, but I like to think that it influenced it.

> ... We are seeing an increased number of students reading below grade level. We... must break this cycle of failure.

Reaction to the multi-level, multi-method model has been favorable. The principal has observed a reading class and was impressed, particularly with on-task students who were reading and working in pairs. He realized that many of the children in my class would not be successful reading at this level without support and found the philosophy behind this approach compelling. I believe that he is awaiting my reaction after using this program for the entire year, as well as the long term effects of the students who are in this program. He encouraged me to think about was how I would assess what reading level these children should be put into the following year when they would revert back to ability groups. I hope to be able

to do testing and say that most, if not all of my students, can be placed in at least a middle ability group or a group that is no more than one half year below grade level.

Another concern was the students who need to be challenged. Evidence suggests that ability grouping (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985) may improve the achievement of the proficient reader. At this point, I feel I am meeting their needs by expecting them to complete additional books in their free time. Some have been more motivated to do this than others. I think some may see it as extra work and not as an honor. It appears my proficient readers are learning a great deal about reading by having to help less proficient readers be successful. During "Back to School Night" and in conferences, I have heard no complaints from parents, either from the side of not challenging a child or challenging a child too much.

What I Have Learned

Teachers in my urban school are becoming more concerned about the effectiveness of our building reading program. Each year we are seeing an increased number of students reading below grade level. We realize we must break this cycle of failure; the earlier we can do this, the better the future will be for our students as well as our society. We know that for children to be successful in the 21ST century they must be good readers and writers.

This year our District is preparing a written philosophy of reading with the assistance of the State University of Albany under the leadership of their Reading Department. The timing for trying new instructional approaches seems optimal. Administrators as well as teachers seem to be open and searching for literacy programs that will effectively address our rising societal expectations. Some of these expectations may be the root of the problem issues our schools are now facing. We, in urban schools, may feel a bit more heavily the burdens placed on us by society, but I believe we are dedicated to improving our educational system to better prepare future generations. Most of us have chosen this as our lives' mission and feel up to the challenge.

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The Ark: Making a Space for Self-Esteem, Literacy, and the Arts

Mary Theresa Streck

ABSTRACT

One community arts and literacy program is described in this article. The author, who lives and works in an urban housing project, describes her diverse programming efforts and connections to local colleges and other agencies. A strong plea to invest in children is argued.

Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour,
rains from the sky a meteoric shower of facts...
they lie unquestioned, uncombined. Wisdom enough to leech us
of our ill is daily spun, but there exists no loom
to weave it into fabric...

– Edna St. Vincent Millay

It was, after all, a public housing project – a bleak and harsh place where dreams often died a sudden death. It was a place where the lights in kids eyes went out at an early age, an easy place to buy or sell drugs. It was also the neighborhood where families raised their precious children and worked hard to make a better life for them. It was a place of amazing generosity and hospitality. A human place caught in a terrible storm.

There had been terrible storms unleashed upon the earth before; there had been frightening times when people had found the courage and creativity to build an ark to help them get through the storm to a better place. So The Ark was built at Taylor Apartments. It was a very small place in the beginning, but there was always enough room for lots of children, the arts and learning. Surely, room enough for a loom.

The Ark began in seminal form in 1978 as the Urban Art Program. During that year I decided to leave teaching in a local high school to begin an art program at the Taylor Apartments. Jay Murnane, the Co-Director of The Ark, had been living and working there for eight years. He encouraged me and wrote the grants that eventually got us started. In 1984, the art program was incorporated as The Ark and the focus of our mission developed and matured over the next eleven years into a rich arts and literacy program.

The Ark is housed in the Taylor Apartments, a federally funded housing project in downtown Troy. We occupy the entire first floor of Building Three. The Troy Housing Authority gives us the space rent free, utilities included. The project is bordered on the west by the Hudson River, on the east and south by The Sage Colleges, and on the north by the New York State Theater Institute. The Congress Street bridge which connects Troy with Watervliet cuts the project into thirds. Building 4 is separated from the other three buildings by the bridge; Building 3 is separated from one and two by the ramp leading onto the bridge.

When the decision to build a new bridge was first discussed in the community, the wise stewards of The Sage Colleges insisted that the roadway leading off the bridge tunnel under the college. Taylor, on the other hand was bisected, eliminating the community's center space, a crucial play space for the children. For all practical purposes, the project is an isolated entity unto itself. There are no other neighborhood families immediately surrounding Taylor. So, the children have created a community at The Ark.

The majority of children attending The Ark are African Americans. Our greatest concern is for these descendants of an involuntary immigration population who continue to experience the effects of racism. They are the children of children who have been denied equal access to desirable jobs, equal access to good education and given limited support within the classroom setting (Ogbu, 1995). For their African ancestors in the United States, learning to read and write was a criminal offense. The children come to us bright and eager to learn, and it is our hope that we counteract the prejudice and negativity that impacts on them daily. They see older siblings and neighbors who are just marking time until they are sixteen and no longer mandated to attend a school that has little meaning for them. At The Ark, we believe that it is our mission to encourage, support, and celebrate these bright children as we bridge the gap between their culture and the school culture, the dominant white culture with the "power." We believe that we "...must take the responsibility to teach, to provide for students who do not already possess them, the additional codes of power" (Delpit, 1988, p.293).

At The Ark, we are learning to be culturally responsive teachers who are more keenly aware of our own "dysconscious racism" (King, 1991). We know, because we live in public housing, that some children come to school each day more privileged than others. We acknowledge that "...different children have different needs and addressing those different needs is the best way to deal with them equitably" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 33). When the children come to The Ark, they are participating in a program which extends the school day into their home environment. They receive additional quality instruction in reading and writing. The children read trade books to one another or are read to by student interns. They write

and illustrate their own stories and are used to seeing those stories bound and displayed with those of other, more famous authors. Our expectations are high, and the children respond with high quality work. We acknowledge a racist dominant culture which has expected less from minority children and in justice, we are building a bridge.

A Day at The Ark

"Jay, would you help me with my homework? I don't understand it." "Susan, I have a project due next Friday on Native Americans. Would you help me build a long house?" "Mary, will you show me how to use the CD-ROM encyclopedia? I have to do a report on Greek architecture." Within one week, well over a hundred children attending The Ark seek information and help for their varied homework projects, from early afternoon through the evening hours.

Our program day begins around 2:00 p.m. when the children from the primary grades jump off the school bus and run eagerly into The Ark. They come voluntarily to us each day and are scheduled for classes in the arts or come to work on homework, the computers and school projects. On Mondays, the second grade works on the computers first. There is a great race for the CD-ROM computers. Ashima has already learned the names of all of the planets and wonderful facts about them by playing *The Magic School Bus in the Solar System* (The Magic School Bus, 1994). Susan, Margaret and two interns from Hudson Valley Community College work with the children and encourage them to try more challenging programs. Sometimes the older children who have mastered the programs will come in as tutors for the little ones.

> The reading program...for the emergent readers...intervention program...

At the same time, the first grade is in an art class with a gentle, strong artist who incorporates good literature with a rich art experience. She keeps the class moving from activity to activity for two hours. Third through fifth graders are in the library working on school assignments and waiting for their turn on the computers. In the lower library, books-on-tape room or any free space, interns from The Sage Colleges work individually or with small groups reading to them, listening to them read, and answering questions about homework. Some children are in the piano room practicing this week's lesson; all are wearing headsets so their combined music doesn't disturb others. Between 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. all of the children are served a snack.

At 3:00 p.m. the middle school children arrive and work on their assignments until a computer is free. At 3:30 p.m. graduate students from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Social Spaces and Electronic Installation class work on the computers with a small group of the older children to introduce them to the Internet. They are creating a web site for The Ark which will be linked with a suburban private school and a rural public school. Ark youngsters are learning how to communicate with children from these schools through E-mail. RPI has graciously given us a guest account. Now we need another phone line!

At 4:30 the first group of middle and high school students participate in a ceramics class. Ceramics is right up there with the computers in popularity. The young adults love it. At the same time a number of children from all of the grades are returning for the Sage Reading Program to meet with tutors for an hour and a half. At 6:00 p.m. a small group of middle and high school young adults goes to jewelry class. They are learning to cut and saw metal and fuse it with a torch. Some are carving wax rings which will be sent out to be cast in silver. Jewelry is a great deal of work, but a small group stays with it faithfully each week. By 8:45 we are pretty tired but very happy after a rewarding day's work and ready to lock up and go home for dinner.

Odemaris Alicea and her tutor, Maria Immediato, read together at college.
Photograph courtesy of Mary Theresa Streck.

The Sage Reading Program

The reading program has been such a gift to all of us at the Ark. Our program for the emergent readers, modeled loosely on Reading Recovery (Clay, 1985) is an early intervention program designed to catch the children before they experience reading difficulty. In the past we have invited the kindergartners to join the program in January. Next year we will start with them in September. The older readers who have already experienced failure in school are more of a challenge. But the tutors know just how to draw them into an enjoyable experience. Tutors find out early on what interests them and use that information to create a program tailored to the children.

Ashton Canty authors his first book with Diane Seaver.
Photograph courtesy of Mary Theresa Streck.

When the children first arrive for the Sage Reading Program they go to the library and wait for their tutors to arrive. They read silently, or read with another child, or read in a group with college faculty. By 5:00 pm. approximately 30 children are quietly working with tutors; some stay at Taylor and some walk a block to Sage's Education Department where they become accustomed to studying on the college campus. For the first hour the tutors work individually with one assigned child, assessing strengths and weaknesses and providing necessary reading strategies while reading with the child. Each tutor brings a snack for the child, and this also becomes an important part of their time together. At 6:00 p.m. all individual tutoring stops for a group sharing session. The children and their tutors take turns occupying the center couch which has become the sharing chair. Microphone in hand, the children take turns reading from a trade book or from a story they have just written. All eyes are on the presenter and there is respectful silence. All around the room children are sitting close to their tutors, backs are being rubbed, little ones are tenderly cuddled, parents are watching and listening with pride. The children know they are safe and cherished. No one is pressured to share, but everyone who wishes is given a turn. Each child is applauded at the end of the sharing. We find all children share by the third evening and often seek out the college faculty to tell what they will be sharing before the tutoring session has even started.

The children are becoming familiar with many authors and are beginning to have favorites. At the end of each semester of the reading program, the tutors buy their child a book. ***Honey I Love, and Other Love Poems*** by Eloise Greenfield (1978) became such a treasured book for one child, Tashay, that her tutor begged her to bring it back so she could return it to the library. On the last day of the semester, to Tashay's delight, the tutor presented her with her very own copy.

A number of children have written books with their tutors, and some have been both authors and illustrators. Their books are bound and prominently displayed on a bookcase which immediately catches your eye as you enter The Ark. Children see other children's books, and they get excited about being authors. The excitement helps to set a purpose for beginning authors as they work their way through the writing process. Jose learned to read through the writing process. Inspired by his favorite author, Bruce Coville, Jose has written three chapter books about monsters. He wrote a letter to Mr. Coville and was so excited to receive a response. Jose carried the letter in his bookbag for half a semester.

Some of the fourth and fifth grade graduates of the Sage Reading Program continue to meet in small groups to discuss books. As a reward for reading, they get to keep the books, and they are starting to build personal home libraries. Last year a group decided to read books by Mildred Taylor. They had wonderful discussions about prejudice. They brought their discussion into school and involved their classmates in a lively dialogue about racism and discrimination. These same graduates now read weekly to the kindergarten class. They remember what they learned from their tutors and are

> Teachers who have never worked with children of color from low-income families... break through stereotypes...

following the same modified Reading Recovery from their tutors and are following the same modified Reading Recovery model as they take on the role of teacher.

Our hope is that we are educating the next generation to read to their children. So many children of privilege come to school having listened to many hours of reading and having the opportunity to read to a family member. We want these children who are learning to love reading to pass this love on to their children. They have many good books to choose from when they come to us. The library at The Ark is slowly becoming one of the best libraries in the area. The books include the classic children books and the best we can find in multicultural literature. A growing number of books are Spanish versions of authors like Robert Munsch, and we are finding more and more bi-lingual books. Our collection includes the Storybox and Sunshine books by the Wright Group. These books are excellent resources for emergent readers. After one or two readings, a child who never read before can now read without assistance. What a feeling of independence and accomplishment for the child. Every time we experience independent reading, we celebrate the child's efforts.

CD-ROMs are especially popular with Sarah Rivera, Jovanie Rosa, and Keith Hughes.
Photograph courtesy of Mary Theresa Streck.

When the Sage graduate students first learn that it is part of their course to come to the project neighborhood, they have many reservations (Gormley, McDermott & Rothenberg, 1995). The first is always about safety. Parents and significant others warn them about Taylor. Some are truly afraid to cross that invisible barrier that separates the two worlds. But once the tutor begins working with the child within the warm inviting environment of The Ark, she knows that she is safe. Once the children have faces and names and are known, Taylor is no longer perceived as a dangerous and frightening place, but the place the children call home. Teachers who have never worked with children of color from low-income families soon are able to break through stereotypes and understand first hand how beautiful and sharp these children really are. The children show their tutors that they are incredibly bright and just waiting to be challenged.

Ashima Dennis and Leila Gheity are enjoying their computer time.
Photograph courtesy of Tom Wethers, Ark Photography Class.

The Sage graduate students, many of whom are teachers already, stay with the same child for three semesters. The culminating semester is much more intense than the first two because it involves the clinic experience. The tutor meets with two children for three hours each week. Sometimes this is a bit of an adjustment for The Ark children who are very used to having the tutor all to themselves. The clinic concludes with a literacy celebration. Parents, neighbors, friends, little sisters and brothers, and graduates of the reading program, gather with the tutors and children in a living room at The Sage Colleges. Each child or group of children prepares a special presentation. There are tables of food and warm embraces as each child says good-bye to a tutor who has become a friend. The two of them have richly blessed each other.

New Experiences

We are always looking for new adventures for our children. Many stay within the Taylor neighborhood most of the year and never venture very far from it. So, this year we all shared an exciting experience when 48 of us went to Boston to the New England Aquarium and the Children's Museum. We just happened to get front row seats at the Aquarium and a number of the children were called up to be part of the act; they are still talking about it. The Children's Museum was the highlight of the day. The children loved the interactive displays and wanted to stay longer. They keep asking if we will go there again this year.

For a number of summers the New York State Museum has offered free tuition to a number of our children to the Time Tunnel, a two week day camp. This year six children were able to attend. When we went for a visit to the museum in December to see the Sharks exhibit and the Mohawk village, many of the Time Tunnel children acted as guides for the rest of the children, proud to know so much about the exhibits. They all want to go back again next summer.

The New York State Theater Institute, our neighbor to the north, invites children into Summerstage, a three week summer workshop and into a weekly course offered in the fall and the spring. As part of the experience, children receive free admission to the Institute's current production.

Through *The Community Residency Program*, a grant received from the New York State Council on the Arts, we were privileged to experience the talent of Ray Matterson. Ray conducted a twice weekly theater group with the teenagers. He came to the group respectfully and they loved him. They often ask when he will be back with us. As a culminating activity to the theater class, Ray organized a tour of NBC in New York City. Thanks to Ray's friend, a news correspondent at NBC, we participated in a behind the scenes tour. We met men and women of color in prominent positions of power who took time to explain their jobs to us. Our children do not see many minority adults in positions of power; for example, in all of Troy's elementary schools there are only two African American teachers.

Funding

The Ark is funded by government and state grants, private foundations, corporate and individual contributions. Every year we start with zero and hope to raise what we need for the year. The Ark's budget is close to the same amount it costs to house one person for a year in the Rensselaer County Jail. It is so frustrating to have to work so hard to fund our program, especially now with state and federal budget cuts. If more "Arks" had half the yearly funding of the county jails, we believe there would no longer be a need for the jails. Our society would instead be addressing cause, instead of symptoms, and investing in the children who will be our future.

Why The Ark Works

We ask only two things of anyone who decides to come along with us:

- Have a passion for your own art-form
- Love the children and delight in them

The children and adults know what they will find, so they keep coming back. In many ways The Ark is the village it takes to raise a child. We are here for the long haul.

Mary Theresa Streck is Co-director of The Ark, an urban arts and literacy program, which is located in Troy, N.Y. Ms. Streck has a Masters Degree in Art Education and will receive her Masters in Reading in May 1996. She is a recipient of the 1994 New York State Reading Association's Student Fellows Award. She presented on the topic of college community literacy partnerships at the NYSRA Annual Conference in November, 1995.

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University-School Partnerships as Active, Thriving Havens for Mentorship [1]

Barbara R. Peltzman and Grace M. Dondero

ABSTRACT

This article describes a university-school partnership between St. John's University and P.S. 48R. The mutually enriching benefits of university-school partnerships are presented with particular attention given to mentoring.

The Children's Defense Fund (1992) states that to "...improve public education through cross-fertilization, schools and institutions of higher learning must form partnerships..." (p.3). If it takes a whole village to raise a child, then the resources of the village must be used to the fullest capacity to develop literacy. A university-school partnership provides both groups with a world view, clearer aims, as well as the mechanisms for achieving those aims, and, as such, must include forms of support necessary to help each partner. Reciprocal teaching, mentoring, tutoring, and in-service staff development are activities that enrich both the university and school.

Background

In keeping with the mission of St. John's University to reach out and help those in need, the special relationship between Public School 48R (P.S. 48R) and the Staten Island Campus of St. John's was established. Since its founding in 1870, St. John's University has provided affordable tuition and scholarly faculty to thousands of young persons in the New York City metropolitan area. Our mission has guided both students and faculty to community service.

In 1986, St. John's University's Division of Education adopted P.S. 48R which, at that time, was in danger of closing due to decreasing enrollment. The new principal, Mrs. Sheila Feinstein, had 97 children on register. St. John's University participated in an on-going dialogue with the public schools and P.S. 48R asked us for help. Collaborative planning called for the Division of Education to provide consultation services on curriculum, innovative teaching methods, and current research. In-service training sessions, individual teacher consultations, and parent-teacher workshops were scheduled. St. John's Education Club arranged for an annual holiday party for P.S. 48R children.

P.S. 48R provided, and continues to provide, a field site for junior education majors to put reading theory into practice. Specific reading skills are planned, taught, and reviewed by students and college supervisors. Initially we started with one class of children using the lunch room two afternoons a week during the fall term for four of St. John's students. Today fifteen college students are placed at P.S. 48R. The school now has a population of over 300 students, a strong PTA, and a multicultural student body. P.S. 48R currently serves as a host school for our student teachers.

Project Literacy began in 1986 with six St. John's University students tutoring six hours a week. Students of many majors participated in the initial program by teaching children to read. Ten years later, 12 students serve as volunteer tutors.

In 1990 the United States Department of Education assumed responsibility for a grant from the Washington Education Project, and this gave birth to the St. John's University Project Welcome, which was designed to ease immigrant parents into the American mainstream. The large number of non-English speaking students at P.S. 48R sparked the creation of this new program. Many of the new immigrant parents wanted help learning to shop, using public transit, and obtaining drivers licenses. Our tutors worked with these parents once a week on basic conversational English with great success.

Project Literacy and Project Welcome have been mutually beneficial to both educational communities. Not only were literacy skills for children and parents developed, St. John's students gained invaluable experience teaching others. The tutors learned to care for their students beyond the teaching of skills; learning to read becomes an emotional investment for everyone involved. Dyadic interaction is highly effective in helping people learn to read (Anglin & Mooradin, 1990; Hickey & Andrews, 1993; Peltzman, 1975).

University-School Partnerships

Adolescents today face dramatically different living conditions with unprecedented social and economic pressures. All too often their support structures have collapsed.S.ed; increasing levels of poverty together with the growing number of households headed by single females suggest that children are often left without sufficient social and emotional support. Adolescents are often surrounded only by their equally confused peers and too many make poor decision with harmful or lethal consequences (Smink, 1990). Neither families, neighborhoods, or social service agencies are able to provide sufficient adult guidance and support for these youth (Bernard, 1991).

In June 1989, the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents published *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*, which has become a watershed report on the education of 12-16 year-old students. The Council found that 25% of adolescents

are at-risk of entering adulthood without the necessary skills for full participation in the work place. They will be under-prepared as responsible adults in our democratic society. These youth are vulnerable for engaging in high-risk behaviors and dropping out of school.

One of the Council's recommendations was to "...connect schools with communities which together share responsibilities for each student's success...using the community resources to enrich the institutional program and opportunities for constructive after-school activities" (p.31). Because of the many changes in our families, economy, and workplace, today's children manifest more serious behavior problems than those of the mid-seventies (Neetles, 1991). Immense structural changes are necessary in education, health care, government, and political leadership if low-income families and children are to survive (Eitzen, 1992). In particular, at-risk children need the support of a caring adult who will guide and serve as a positive role model.

Now a special school-community partnership, mentoring is benefiting students directly. Mentoring programs offer an effective early intervention strategy to help youngsters in grades kindergarten through eighth to improve self-esteem, broaden their vision of opportunity and apply themselves in school (Calahan & Farris, 1990). The children mentored today are future leaders for the 21st century. Children face unprecedented problems, and we cannot permit society to consider children expendable (Kozol, 1991).

> ...We cannot permit society to consider children expendable.

Mentoring is not a new idea. The word "mentor" has a Greek root meaning steadfast and enduring. In *The Odyssey*, Homer assigns the name Mentor to the wise man entrusted with the care of Telemechus, the son of Odysseus. In Western thought, mentoring has become synonymous with the wise teacher, guide, and friend (Gehrke, 1991). Today the word mentor means any person who develops an on-going relationship with someone in need of a stable influence. Mentors, such as our St. John's tutors, are in a unique position to positively affect a young person's life by serving as role models (Cave and Quint, 1990). Mentors are particularly important to those youngsters who, for a variety of reasons (e.g., poverty), are at-risk of dropping out of school. Adolescent alienation, well known to all who work with teenagers, negatively affects families and schools. Educators can help families combat this problem by mentoring youngsters from elementary through high school years. It makes no sense to wait until problems manifest themselves before intervention takes place (Coleman, 1991).

A state-wide mentoring program was founded in 1988 by Matilda R. Cuomo, New York State's former First Lady, as part of the state's celebration of the Decade of the Child. This program provides a vehicle for adults, both young and old, to affect the future of young people through an intervention program targeting elementary and junior high school pupils. Along with over 500 mentors from various corporate and public sector sites, 16 St. John's University mentors are matched with students from P.S. 48R and Intermediate School #2 on Staten Island.

Mentors are matched on the basis of shared interests and goals with mentees. Each mentor is screened and trained to become part of a collaborative team that includes parents, teachers, and a mentoring coordinator. Naturally, there is no single profile of a mentor. A mentor can influence a young person's personal and academic identities in profound ways. The mentor may serve in many roles including model, sponsor, advisor, teacher, and counselor. Mentors set standards of performance, usually high ones, to give the mentee the assistance and self-confidence to reach these expectations.

The mentees in the New York State Mentoring Program are young people who express a sincere interest in participating in the program. They must be free of severe psychological and behavioral difficulties that would more appropriately require professional assistance. Mentees are young people in need of positive and caring guidance in dealing with the challenges associated with growing-up. Because mentees are often considered "at-risk," the criteria for selection of mentees includes family disruption, academic deficiency, psycho-social difficulties and marginal or under-achieving behaviors.

Parents are crucial to the success of this program. They must make certain their child attends all appointments and meets with their mentors only at times and places specified by the school. Parents are expected to support the mentoring relationship by discussing mentoring activities with their child and suggesting activities that might be helpful.

Conclusion

A university-school partnership enriches all participants. Our partnership has benefitted P.S. 48R in many ways, including an increase in enrollment from 97 to 301 students, in-service assistance for classroom teachers, guest speakers for the school's PTA, annual holiday parties for the entire school, small group reading help for children in need, student teachers to share newest teaching methods, mentors for at-risk children, lessons in English reading and conversation for parents, as well as consultation services from the university. P.S. 48R has been able to expand its physical plant because of its increased enrollment; this includes a funded Power Library and complete use of the first floor which was previously occupied by the District Committee on Special Education.

> A university-school partnership enriches all participants.

The partnership has also provided St. John's University students with a site for their Junior Field Experience in reading as well as in

student teaching. The junior class judges the annual P.S. 48R Science Fair. The partnership enables St. John's students to put educational theory into practice in a variety of ways. Education Club volunteers have gained new insights into the theory discussed in campus classes through contact with students, teachers, and the principal at P.S. 48R. St. John's faculty have reaffirmed their commitment to children and parents through attending plays, concerts and art shows at the school.

The introduction of the New York State Mentoring Program at P.S. 48R has benefitted both parties. The Mentoring Program reaches out to children while they are still connected to the school in an attempt to broaden their visions of the future. We provide the children access to older successful people outside their immediate family. The Mentoring Program creates a linkage that makes adult role models accessible to young people to expand their potential and broaden their horizons by providing P.S. 48R students with adults who care and help. These children have grown in confidence and skills, while the mentors have grown in their ability to listen and to share with others.

On May 17, 1995, Mrs. Feinstein, Principal of P.S. 48R, received the Patrick Daly Memorial Award for outstanding school and community leadership. She expressed her thanks to the St. John's University community for its continued commitment to the children and parents of P.S. 48R. The entire Division of Education was called to the stage to be recognized for continuing to fulfill the Vincentian Mission of Service to Others.

In 1870 St. John's University was founded to provide an affordable education to those for whom education was not financially possible. We hope that our students will learn from our unique university-school partnership that service to others provides special rewards. Service to others is a way of life at St. John's University. The university-school partnerships help us fulfill our mission and ensure a brighter future for all involved. The mission continues.

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the N.Y.S.R.A. Conference, Kiamesha Lake, November 1995.

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Grace Dondero is Assistant Professor of Education at Notre Dame College, St. John's University. She has authored numerous articles and frequently presents papers at state, national and international literacy conferences.

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Perspectives

For the first time *The Language and Literacy Spectrum* introduces the Perspectives section of the journal. We envision it serving as a forum for debate and discussion of contemporary issues, theories and practices affecting literacy education in New York.

We initiate Perspectives with two reactions to Valerie Polakow's (1993) book, ***Lives on the Edge: Single Mothers and their Children in the Other America*** (University of Chicago Press). Polakow discusses the implications of public policy and school pedagogy on poor, single women and their children. In particular, and of interest to our readers, she details the devastating effects of deficit theories of learning and the inadequacies of compensatory education practices upon poor children's literacy learning and development.

Another book we recommend to the NYSRA readership is Sharon Jean Hamilton's (1995) ***My Name's Not Susie: A Life Transformed by Literacy.*** (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.). This slim volume tells the poignant story of "...using literacy to live beyond the levels that create boundaries and limit dreams and possibilities" (p. 8). Hamilton chronicles the power of literacy in her life, first as an escape and later as an opportunity to redefine herself. This book is a *must read* for all educators, but most especially for teachers of at-risk learners.

We thank Gregory Brooks for submitting his review of *Lives on the Edge*, because his manuscript provided the impetus for this new section of the journal. We also express our appreciation to Jay Murnane for his willingness to write a reaction to Polakow work, knowing that it would serve as a counterpoint to the Brooks' essay. We hope both of their perspectives will stimulate discussion among our readers about how we might improve literacy instruction for all children, especially for those in the poorest schools.

- Editors

A Response to Lives on the Edge

Jay Murnane

In *Amazing Grace*, Jonathan Kozol (1995) asks an agonizing question: How does a nation deal with those whom it has cursed? Valerie Polakow answers that question in a compact integrated work which blends literature, history, social analysis, current educational theory, and personal research into the lives of impoverished women and their children in Michigan during the years 1989 through 1991. This is a disturbing and difficult book. It is also an important and necessary one which offers readers compelling reasons to make connections and changes – troubling connections, fundamental changes.

Polakow sets the source of the problem in the complex imagery of the other, which permeates our attitudes, perceptions, and judgments and empowers our political, economic, and cultural systems. Other is one of those ubiquitous mutational labels which can emerge as "gook," "kike," "nigger," "spic," "red devil," "retard," or "babe," depending on the particular moment in history and vested interest of those in power. Whatever specific form it takes, it always means something totally dissimilar from what is considered the prevailing norm; something less than human, at least – perhaps even dirty, dangerous, demonic. So it is with the impoverished in the United States in the latter half of the twentieth century, most of whom are women and children.

> This is a disturbing...book which offers... compelling reasons to make... fundamental changes.

The result of the history of treating the impoverished as other is our general acceptance of the practice of blaming – and punishing – the victims. This helps to explain our habitual response: the charity of handouts rather than the justice of inclusion, fair distribution, and entitlement. Polakow's socio-historical narrative (complemented by socially-critical literature from the respective centuries) and her social analysis are excellent and erudite. However, when she writes of her experiences with the women and children she interviewed and came to know in Michigan, even the books dour and forbidding layout cannot blunt the clarity and passion of her experience and her insight. This is Polakow at her most poignant and penetrating; this is where her book picks up momentum and the power to compel.

She writes about children in pre-school and school settings, again from the point of view of other. Historically, once a person or group is so defined, there is nothing that cannot be done to them, with impunity. We readily acknowledge that relative to the death camps of Europe, the plains of the Dakotas, My Lai, the slave docks of New York and Virginia, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, rape crisis centers and shelters for battered women and children. We have more difficulty acknowledging it relative to places like our schools, where violence can be no less real, only more subtle and elusive. Her research and her conclusions are troubling, even threatening. She interprets for us the signs of our times and shows us the classrooms of today and tomorrow, in which a growing majority of the students do not share the dominating culture, language, or presuppositions. For some of these children, Columbus is a monster; for many, Martin Luther

King, Jr. is a stranger. Chronic hunger and the longing for a stable, predictable roof over their heads have more urgency than phonics or whole language. And yet, these are children who want and need to learn. Since they are our future, they must be addressed with respect and cannot be dismissed. Dismissal is subtle and elusive, too.

Jonathan Kozol ends his book with a kind of informed despair. Valerie Polakow ends hers with a comprehensive program of entitlement and redistribution. Given the current political climate and the recurring dream that in spite of it, human life can be made more humane for everyone in our society, they are both right.

Jay Murnane is Co-director of The ARK, an arts and literacy program, where he works closely with urban families. Mr. Murnane has an advanced Masters in Theological Studies and is committed to social justice.

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Penury, Pedagogy and Politics: Another Response

Gregory W. Brooks

Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds most of the criticisms made on the habits of the poor by the well-housed, well-warmed, and well-fed.

– Herman Melville

In *Lives on the edge*, Valerie Polakow deconstructs many of the "preposterous assumptions" assigned to poor, young single mothers and their children, and she reports the struggle these women face each day trying to keep themselves and their children from falling through the cracks on the harsh fringes of society. Throughout history, Polakow says, "Both women and children have shared in different ways the fate of the voiceless...regulated by patriarchal authority, by religion, and by the state, their lives have been under surveillance, submission, and often the contestation of power" (p. 20). In this book, Polakow gives voice to the voiceless and provides these women with a forum to tell about their lives.

Polakow sets the stage for her discussion of present-day public policies, practices, and perspectives in the United States regarding poor, single mothers and their children, by leading the reader through history to revisit the abuse, neglect, and sheer drudgery of their everyday existence — at the hands of societies that were unyielding in the manner in which they conceived and perceived the ideologies, expectations, and woes of motherhood and childhood.

Polakow is effective in debunking time-honored "preposterous assumptions" about welfare, motherhood, and the at-risk label assigned to the poor. These women are truly living on the edge with too little money to be independent from welfare but not poor enough to qualify for sufficient assistance to help them get on their feet. Instead, the current welfare system has condemned them to a social and economic situation in which they barely subsist.

All mothers, poor and otherwise, must find ways to juggle their various responsibilities. It has become easy and commonplace, says Polakow, for women and children with fewer options to be labelled at risk. She questions the meaning and implications behind the term, emphatically stating that the institutions and agencies that assign this label are more in a state of jeopardy and chaos than the people they supposedly serve.

Polakow's discussion of early childhood education is most enlightening. In contrasting public pre-school programs, like Head Start, with private pre-schools which children of the more affluent attend, Polakow found that funded programs provide the poorest quality and expect the least from their participants; this theme resonates from other recent reports (McGill-Franzen, 1992; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). Most of the schools and educators Polakow studied seem to equate financial poverty with a lack of ability, intelligence, and desire, expecting that these poor mothers and children will not succeed. The despair and limited aspirations of many of these women echo the experiences of high school youths in *Ain't No Making It* (MacLeod, 1987). No one expected those youth would amount to much, and they themselves didn't feel it was worth much effort to try in a society that so outwardly displayed its disaffection.

Poor children are "badged and ticketed" by educators and the schools they attended, claims Polakow, just as Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist was labelled poor and worthless by the society in which he lived. With so much turmoil and struggle to survive daily, young poor children often arrive at school lacking much experience with print which is interpreted by educators as a lack of ability or interest on the part of the child and parent. Instead of providing rich, meaningful encounters with reading and writing which fosters a love for learning and literacy, educators of the poor inundate these children with drill and practice lessons and worksheets, demanding accurate answers and strict adherence to rules and regulations. Furthermore, these educators have low expectations for academic and/or social improvement from these children. Public pre-schools simply maintain these children's marginal literacy experiences, competency, and appreciation.

While Polakow offers much criticism and some insights regarding the flaws in preschools for poor youngsters, she offered few solutions. What specifically can be done to place poor children on an even keel with their more affluent counterparts?

Polakow maintains that we, in privileged America, create and preserve the otherness and poverty which poor mothers and their children endure. She articulates these short-comings and suggests various remedies, most of which revolve around issues of funding. While financial

independence is of great concern and is essential for survival in a capitalistic economy, it is rarely as cut-and-dried as Polakow would have the reader believe. Throwing more money at poverty in the form of universal health care, affordable housing, or national childcare, as Polakow suggestions at the end of the book, are, in my opinion, unlikely to be sufficient.

Those now living in poverty and on government assistance need to experience what it means to live independently. That is, they need to develop a sense of personal responsibility for their social, economic, familial, and sexual actions. It seems to me that some of Polakow's women had a strong sense of personal responsibility and were working hard to better themselves while on public assistance; other women seemed convinced that government and members of the dominant society were primarily responsible for their predicaments and, therefore, obligated to provide them more financial support.

The women and children whose stories are told in this book are fraught with injustices and frustrations; moreover, we in the dominant society have established and maintained certain regulations and attitudes which work against these "undeserving poor" women and children. I am not convinced, however, that the unfortunate economic and familial conditions people find themselves in are simply an accident of birthright or a result of fate. I found Polakow's matter-of-fact discussions of adolescent pregnancy disturbing, misleading, and lacking a sense of personal responsibility with no suggestions that the pregnancies were ill-timed or irresponsible. She treats the whole concept of responsible birth control nonchalantly, leaving me with the impression that she believes pregnancy to be a normal and acceptable, though consequential, alternative for teenage girls and young women generally ill-prepared for parenthood.

Those... living in poverty need to develop a sense of personal responsibility.

> "There was little discussion about contraception or abortion...Awareness and use of birth control methods were absent prior to their first pregnancy, which seemed to 'just happen' to them" (pp. 79).

Naturally, pregnancy does not "just happen." Polakow never discusses the irresponsibility of the young men and women whose choices resulted in children being born into poverty. Neither does she mention the need for more effective, supportive sex education and/or other programs where adolescents might better learn responsible sexual behavior *before* engaging in sexual activity. Polakow only blames "the system" for not caring for the new babies and their young mothers *ex post facto*. Of course, we must provide assistance and support for the children in these families. At the same time, however, we must also begin work to strongly emphasize more responsible attitudes and behaviors on the part of these and other young women and their young male companions.

Markus and Nurius (1986) speak of "possible selves" as the selves individuals idealize, expect, and fear becoming in the future, based in part on goals they set for themselves and perceptions of their past and present selves. Apparently, the young men and women in this book perceived a severely limited number of "possible selves" and, unfortunately, the "pregnant teenager on welfare" self proved the most salient. Educators and parents must help children to consider options, establish goals, envision possible selves, and contemplate the rewards as well as the consequences of various choices. Ultimately youth must take on personal responsibility for their own lives.

A literate possible self, for example, should be viewed by young adults as equally, if not more, worthwhile, likely, and salient than pregnancy and ill-prepared to care for themselves and their children and dependent upon public assistance. Yes, public policies, support from others, and access to literacy materials and opportunities are essential, but youth must also demonstrate personal fortitude and aspirations for literacy on their own. Teale (1986) wrote of poor families who were unable to purchase books and magazines but were frequent and avid users of their local library. Lack of funds did not prevent these families taking on responsibility to access materials and live literate lives. The young adults that Polakow describes apparently waited until after becoming parents to visualize literate possible selves, and then they expected the system to pay for this education.

All "privileged" citizens are not insensitive to the problems of the poor nor do all the poor behave irresponsibly. Unfortunately, Polakow wags her unapproving finger at only one side — the privileged. She calls for massive reform in the way privileged America conducts itself but she fails to require the same for the unprivileged. Real change requires a real commitment from all corners of society, and this begins with awareness. *Lives on the Edge* provides this awareness in its disturbing account of the problems confronting single mothers and their children. The issues Polakow raises and the personal portraits she constructs are of paramount importance and interest to teachers who work daily with children and families facing similar or identical problems. While Polakow's analyses largely fail to address the issue of personal responsibility and fall short in providing solutions to the problems she portrays, the book clearly focuses attention on the need to rethink and change educational, social, and economic attitudes, policies, and practices for the poor.

Gregory W. Brooks is a doctoral student in the Department of Reading, University at Albany, State University of New York. Areas of interest include the home/school partnership, family literacy, and children who find reading or learning to read difficult.

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Zigler, E., & Muenchow, S. (1992). *Head Start: The inside story of America's most successful educational experiment.* New York: Basic Books.

The late Senator James H. Donovan enthusiastically promoted literacy and parent education in New York State. He served as Chairman of the New York State Senate committee on education for many years, and he co-founded Parents as Reading Partners (PARP). The Senator James Donovan Memorial Scholarship is awarded annually to a member of the New York State Reading Association who is currently enrolled in graduate studies in literacy education. Those who might be interested in submitting essays should contact NYSRA Headquarters in Albany, New York.

Winner of the 1995 Senator James Donovan Memorial Scholarship Award

Using Culturally Responsive Materials and Approaches: One Program Designed for Mexican Americans

Benjamin Salazar

In this essay I outline a summer writing program for bilingual/bicultural Mexican American adults and youth on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The course was taught by myself and another bilingual Mexican American teacher, both experienced in teaching ESL to Mexicans. It was intended to utilize the sociocultural background of the students. This is congruent with the latest research on effective instruction. Because the ages of the students taking the course as well as their degree of proficiency with English and Spanish literacy would vary greatly, a high degree of flexibility was maintained on our part.

I focused on this particular group of learners because I am a member of their community; we share the same networks of friends and relatives, and I know many of these young people personally. My grandparents arrived in New York City from Mexico in the 1920's, and although I spent most of my youth in Texas, I have been living in New York City now for over ten years. My family has deep roots in this city, and I feel that I can at least somewhat relate my own experience growing up as Mexican American to their experiences. With these teenagers and young adults, I feel that I know something of what they are going through and, more importantly, of what they have yet to experience.

Keeping this in mind, I developed a class reading list, which is comprised of materials that deal specifically with issues of Mexican American identity, together with an accompanying writing assignments. These are themes which everyone in our community must deal with individually at some point in their life. For example, the autobiographical stories told by teenage Mexican girls in East Harlem describe feelings of shame associated with being Mexican and of trying to assimilate a Puerto Rican identity (Tashlik, 1994). Writing assignments focused on autobiographical material; we began with learning the interview process, which I had taught before in various teacher education programs. This enabled students to interview parents or elders at home about the many trials and sacrifices associated with the immigration process, providing insight into the strength of cultural identify of their forefathers and ultimately into their own identify. The first writing assignments evolved from these interviews.

I tried to make the book selections current, specific to New York City (Hinojosa, 1995; Tashlik,1994), and based on oral histories of real people (Atkin, 1993; Hinojosa, 1995; Hoobler, 1994; Lopez,1993; Tashlik, 1994). In other words, my purpose was to make the reading relevant. The articles and videotapes were intended to be provocative and foster discussion. In general, the course materials reflected my knowledge of the interests and needs of the people for whom the course was intended. The idea for the course began with my feeling that issues of ethnic and cultural identity represent an urgent need with the first large generation of new Mexican Americans in New York City, the oldest of whom are now in their early twenties. The initial impetus began with the simple, inexorable request made to me by someone in the community, "I want to learn how to write better."

> Literacy is created collaboratively and socially.

According to Scribner and Cole (1981), literacy is a set of cultural practices developed in and for different social contexts. Literacy is created collaboratively and socially. Thus, I am speaking here of literacy not narrowly-defined to the knowledge of reading and writing, but cultural "reading" and interpreting which the students must create for themselves. To be "literate," one must learn to be fluent in the use and interpretation of symbols according to the

values assigned by that culture. This is the broader sense of literacy which I had as an objective of the writing program.

Participatory approaches strive to recognize and respect the funds of knowledge as well as aspirations which students bring to the learning process. These approaches then, if not centered on the cultural background of the learners, must at least acknowledge their cultures. My participatory literacy education program was collaborative, and learner-centered, giving students power to make decisions about the program. A framework was constructed within which specialties could be developed, such as family literacy and community-based literacy. In addition to needs assessments which were used at the beginning of the program to find out the specific types and contexts of literacy were desired by the students, we remained responsive and flexible during program operation. Learners were also involved in their own self-assessment.

> ...One must... be fluent in the use and interpretation of symbols according to the values assigned by that culture.

Effective adult literacy programs utilize effective learners' needs and experiences to guide both the curriculum and the course of instruction. The intent of the summer writing program was that it be vital, relevant, and meet the needs of the learners. The location of the program was, both in a physical and metaphorical sense, "where they live." Much depended on the particular students' needs and desires for literacy. Some certainties were evident: 1) The readings drew on learners' own cultural knowledge; 2) The instructors shared first languages and cultural background with the learners; 3) Through writing about identity in this setting, the learners had the opportunity to give voice to experiences otherwise often suppressed, devalued, or misunderstood in the larger society.

It is my hope that the literacy we created reached beyond the walls of the program setting. These students' experiences and the immigration of their families have value for the entire Mexican community in New York City, and indeed for those who share an immigrant history.

Benjamin Salazar is a member of the Brooklyn Reading Council and is actively engaged in literacy instruction.

Suggested Culturally Relevant Reading List on Mexican Americans

Ada, A.F. (1994). *Me llamo Maria Isabel.* New York: Athenum.

Ancona, G. (1994). *The pinata maker/el pinatero.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company.

Braun, B. (1994). *A weekend with Diego Rivera.* New York: Rizzoli.

Cisneros, S. (1994). *Hairs/Pelitos.* New York: Knopf.

Cruz, A.M. (1991). *The woman who cried.* San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

Frankson, M.S. (1990). Chicano literature for young adults:An annotated bibliography. *English Journal,* 79, 30-38.

Hernandez, R. (1991). Hispanic organizations: Searching for unity. *Hispanic,* 18-22.

Hufford, L. (1988). Chicano challenged America to live its ideals. *National Catholic Reporter,* 24, 19.

Kohl, Herbert. (1991). *I won't learn from you ! : The role of assent in learning.* Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.

Navarrete, R. (1994). *A darker share of crimson: Odyssey of a Harvard Chicano.* New York: Bantam Books.

Rodriquez, R. *The education of Richard Rodriquez: An autobiography.* New York: Bantam Books.

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Smith, L.G. (1989). My kettle of fish: Four Anglo French families, four ways of bringing up bilingual children. *Time: Education Supplement* (March 3rd) B-15.

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Scribner, S. & Cole, M. (1981). *The psychology of literacy.* Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press.

Tashlik, P. (1994). *Hispanic, female and young: An anthology.* Houston: Pinata Books.

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Spanning the World on the Wings of Books: Our Choices for 1995

Children's Literature Committee, New York State Reading Association, Esther Berkowitz, Chairperson; Mary Barton, Pat Chaplin, Faye Cohen, Adele Harris, Tom Hazuka, Linda LaRou, Stiles Najac, Anne F. Roberts, Alice Sample, Nancy Sharoff, Rita Silverman and Ann L. Stumpf

ABSTRACT

This article summarizes the book recommendations of the NYSRA Children's Literature Committee for 1995. As we were reviewing 1995 publications, the book choices naturally divided into historical fiction and nonfiction, voices of contemporary realistic fiction and poetry.

Children's literature transports readers to different worlds that span the knowledge and celebrate the diversity of the human spirit. The Children's Literature Committee has chosen three of these worlds for its book reviews: the worlds of the past, the worlds of children, and the worlds of poetry. These choices honor where we have been, where we are now, and how we can create beauty, feeling and experiences with the printed word.

Worlds of the Past

Historical nonfiction captures children's interests in past persons and events by glimpsing their world and experiences. Similarly, historical fiction is a genre that gives a sense of reality to the past so that students understand that real people lived in times long ago. Books help children connect with history in ways textbooks simply can not. Three of the best we read are recommended below.

Coast to Coast with Alice by Patricia Rusch Hyatt (Carolrhoda Books Inc., 1995, $18.25) takes place in 1909 when 21-year-old Alice Ramsey is determined to be the first woman driver to cross the United States in her Maxwell touring car. Written in journal form with actual photos taken on the trip, this true story is recorded by her best friend, Minna Jahns, one of the three companions on the trip. For intermediate readers (grades 5-6), the story is a way of contrasting cross country travel of the early 1900s to today. The book provides a springboard for journal writing and for research on subjects such as the invention of the automobile and women's place in society in the early 1900's.

An extremely important book on women's place in the past (and the present) is ***Herstory: Women who Changed the World*** edited by Ruth Ashy and Deborah Gore Ohrn (Viking, 1995, $19.95). As Gloria Steinem states in her introduction, "But even reading one book that describes the world *as if women mattered* can change the rest of your life." In encyclopedia format, according to historical period from prehistory to the present, the editors have combed multitudinous sources for information. This critical book provides much needed information on magnificent contributions of women. This is a must for any school library.

Former slaves become pioneers setting out from Virginia to California in Wagon ***Train: A Family Goes West in 1865*** by Courtney C. Wright (Holiday House, 1995, $19.95). The reader shares their adventures through the eyes of Ginny a her family endures fear of an Indian attack, snake bites, and swollen rivers. This fictional book is fictional shows the strength and perseverance of early settlers and is a good companion to a study of the Civil War and westward expansion.

> ...Choices honor where we have been, where we are now, and how we can create beauty, feeling and experiences with the printed word.

Worlds of Children

Children are greatly influenced by their families. Books provide windows into family relationships and allow readers new insights into their own and other families. We read a number of books which highlight the importance of family as well as the

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difficulties often faced by families. In this section we offer our recommendations of the best contemporary fiction we read.

Apache Rodeo and ***A Walk to the Great Mystery*** depict the relationships between children and their Native American families. ***Apache Rodeo*** by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith, photographs by Lawrence Migdale (Holiday House, 1995, $15.95) is a good book for intermediate readers. A ten year-old Native girl shows great pride while telling about the preparations for the traditional Apache annual rodeo in which she is participating. The text is filled with the details of the mountain Apaches, family life, and the old and new ways of the people. By including photographs, a map, and a glossary, the author has provided an excellent resource for students doing research on Native American-related projects.

A Walk to the Great Mystery written and illustrated by Virginia A. Stroud (Dial Books, 1995, $14.99) is ideally suited for middle level readers (Grades 3-5). It is a wonderfully illustrated book with simple text that creates a story every child can understand. Two children visit their grandmother, a medicine woman. In seeking answers to "the great mystery," they learn that the great mystery is within each person.Although the lesson the children learn is derived from age old customs and beliefs, the story takes place in present day. This book is a natural connection to a grandparents theme where children interview and obtain information about their grandparents' past.

The New King by Doreen Rappaport, illustrated by E. B. Lewis (Dial Books, 1995, $14.99) is another book for middle level readers (grades 3-5). Set in Madagascar, the story begins as the young prince Rakoto learns of his father's death. Rakoto turns to the royal advisors for counsel. He seeks an understanding that will help him cope with his father's death. Through the use of metaphors, the Wise Woman helps give the boy understand the meaning of death. Children will feel a kinship to Rakoto and the responsibilities he must shoulder. Their responses can encourage a discussion of loss, and this book provides great opportunities for expression of feelings about death.

Two young adult novels deal with contemporary problems. ***From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun*** by Jacqueline Woodson (Blue Sky Press, 1995, $14.95) is told through the voice of Melanin Sun, named such by his single, black mother because of his unusually dark skin. Melanin shares his thoughts and experiences through narration and journals. At thirteen, when his biggest concern is whether to phone the girl he likes, Melanin's mother brings home her new love: a white woman. How will he explain this to his buddies, his girlfriend, to himself? In Woodson's sensitive, moving novel, Melanin struggles to cope and adjust. The story celebrates the power of the adolescent to deal with and accept change. Liam Cormac's life, in ***Eagle Kite***, by Paula Fox (Orchard, 1995, $14.99), is devastated when he learns that his father is dying of AIDS. The homosexual affair that caused his father to contract the disease is the big secret in the family. Liam eventually confronts what he has known all along to be the truth and is at peace with his father before the end. Fox is expert in creating realism and depicting the emotions of characters. Issues raised in these novels are relevant and potentially explosive; they demand exposure for young adults. Both authors have handled these issues with intelligence, sensitivity, and honesty, making them an invaluable resources for teachers, librarians, and guidance counselors as well as powerful reads for adolescents.

Worlds of Poetry

Poetry is a potentially powerful genre which allows the expression of inner thoughts and feelings. Too often it is a genre which is done in isolated units. Some of the poetry books we recommend give song to those voices which may be largely unknown to readers. Poetry can also be great fun wherein language is playful and delightful. We also recommend a number of humorous poetry books.

Navajo: Visions and Voices Across the Mesa by Shonto Begay (Scholastic, 1995, $15.95) brings together the artwork and poetry of Begay. The chants, stories, and poems create a vision of past and present Navajo life.Begay paints with words and illustrations. The words are full of the power of memory, etching the details for the reader. The paintings are created by small brush strokes which repeat amongst the contrasting and muted colors. The poems and illustrations can be appreciated at all levels because the timeless themes of family, home, love are universal and ageless.

Poetry reflecting Mexican American life in the United States is found in ***Canto Familiar*** by Gary Soto, illustrated by Annika Nelson (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1995, $17.00). These poems show how much all people have in common while celebrating different ways of life. "Papa's Menudo" tells of a Sunday ritual, a meal that is savored and evokes the warmth of family, home and simple, shared pleasures. Another poem, "Spanish", empowers the child who lives in both the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking worlds. Because there will be many shared responses (e.g., "Yes, I remember" and "I feel that way too"), this book is a wonderful read aloud for all ages. Soto has contributed yet another wonderful book on Mexican American experiences.

Another poetry book that creates images of home is ***Wherever Home Begins: 100 Contemporary Poems*** selected by Paul B. Janeczko (Orchard Books, 1995, $15.95). This book is for intermediate to advanced readers (Grades 5 and up). Poets from varied backgrounds and cultures describe homes and the places connected to them. The poems are full of colorful images and rich language that will inspire students to observe their own homes and surroundings.

On a lighter note, there are poetry books which bring humor to the readers. ***Snuffles and Snouts*** (Dial Books, 1995, $14.99) features poems selected by Laura Robb and pictures by Steven Kellogg. The much maligned pig is the subject of all the poems. Works by Lewis Carroll, Jane Yolen, and James Reeves are accompanied by the whimsical art of Kellogg whose line drawings and watercolor bring brightness to every page. Another book that creates a playful mood is ***Animals in the Snow***, by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Carol Schwartz (Hyperion Books,1995, $14.95). The repetitive text

encourages young readers to join him in reading aloud the poems that create glimpses of winter with the animals. Each of the two-page spread of illustrations is a feast of detail which will occupy the young readers as they study the pictures of nature. More animals are the subject of ***Ridicholas Nicholas*** by J. Patrick Lewis, illustrated by Victoria Chess (Dial Books, 1995, $14.99). Pen and ink illustrations accompany poems about the variety of animals in various habitats. Children will enjoy reading or listening to these poems. The expressions on the faces of the animals create personalities and feelings that add to the humor of the poetry.

Lunch Money and Other Poems About School by Carol Diggory Shields (Dutton Children's Books, 1995, $14.99) heralds the voices of students; they will love the poems that deal with the school from their perspective. The cartoon-like illustrations are full of wit and detail.

For sports enthusiasts, Lillian Morrison has compiled poems about basketball in ***Slam Dunk*** (Eriksson Books, 1995, $15.95) covering every aspect of the game and celebrating outstanding players. Illustrations by Bill James are as varied as the poems from colorful bright action drawings to pencil sketches of many of the greats of basketball.

Jonathan Graciani selects a book from The Ark library.
Photograph courtesy of Mary Theresa Streck.

LINES

Sigmund A. Boloz

Papa use to take the time to set out
Our money in little lines,
Where each of us would claim ours
From their linear designs

Then Mama would line us up
And walk to the bus,
Where she'd wait in a line
With each one of us.

The bus would stop,
And down the long line to our seat,
Where we'd sit in anticipation
While we dangled our small, young feet.

Then off at the library,
Up the long line of stairs,
It seemed an eternity
For us to just get there.

Then through those huge doors,
Through the turnstiles we'd go,
To look through the long lines of books
Set out in each endless row.

And after the hour of browsing,
How good time can deceive,
Each choosing a small line of books,
We'd be ready to leave,

Eager to check out
The books that we'd need,
And to stand in the lines
With people who read.

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Call for Manuscripts

The Language and Literacy Spectrum, a journal of the New York State Reading Association

The seventh volume of **The Language and Literacy Spectrum** is being prepared for spring 1997 publication. Manuscripts from our annual conference and those relating to literacy, literacy in our multicultural society, classroom language, children's literature, reading for second language learners, emergent and beginning reading, content area reading instruction, remediation, assessment and inclusion of special and remedial students are some of the topics that would be especially welcomed.

The Language and Literacy Spectrum accepts contributions from teachers, teacher educators, researchers and other interested individuals. Contributors must submit three copies of each manuscript with an abstract of 75-100 words. Only original manuscripts, which have not previously been published, will be considered for the journal. Manuscripts are ordinarily between 10-20 pages long and must be typed according to APA format. Author(s) should be identified on the title page only. If a manuscript is accepted for the journal, contributors must submit a 3.5" floppy disk of the manuscript in *WordPerfect* format, for either a PC or MacIntosh computer.

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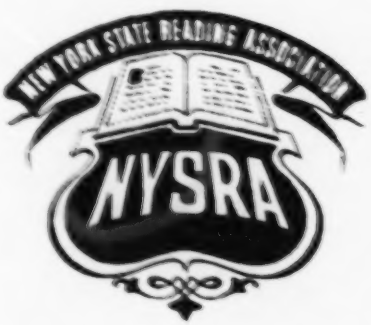

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